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THE INFLUENCE OF LUTHER AND CALVIN ON JOHN BUNYAN'S  
GRACE ABOUNDING AND THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

by



K.A. WOODMAN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and  
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..... JOHN BUNYAN'S GRACE ABOUNDING AND THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS .....  
submitted by ..... K.A. WOODMAN .....  
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of Master of ..... ARTS .....





## Abstract

In this thesis I propose to study the influence of Luther and Calvin on John Bunyan as expressed in Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress. Chapter I defines those elements of Luther's experience and theology that apply to a study of his impact on Bunyan. Similarly, chapter II deals with Calvin's understanding of predestination, a concept which finds significant expression in Bunyan's works. Finally, the third, fourth, and fifth chapters discuss the artistic implications of the two theologians' impact on Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress.



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## I. Theological Background: Luther

There are four elements of Luther and his theology which are particularly relevant to a study of the influence of Luther on selected writings of John Bunyan. They are: Luther's life and experience, his understanding of Scripture, theology of the law and the Gospel, and his theology of the Cross. Because of the union of theology and experience in Luther's life it is important to understand something of his "person" in order to comprehend his theology. Gerhard Ebeling, in Luther: An Introduction to His Thought, writes:

And it is simply a fact that the study of Luther's theology involves us to a greater degree than in the case of almost any other theologian with his person. Luther's statement 'Sola . . . experientia facit theologum' is as it were a motto interpreting the whole of his life. If we turn to his theology, we cannot overlook his life and his experience.<sup>1</sup>

A study of Luther's life reveals him to be a passionate man. Extreme emotional experiences were a part of his life from his youth. Luther described himself as an excitable man with a hot temper.<sup>2</sup> The driving force of his life, a force which led him into acute emotional mood changes, and plagued Luther even before he entered the





monastery, was the problem of how a vile, unrighteous sinner could stand in the presence of a holy, righteous and demanding God.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, because of his fear of death and the concomitant confrontation by God, during a near death experience while travelling in a thunderstorm, Luther vowed: "to abandon the world, and devote himself entirely to God."<sup>4</sup> Ebeling writes of Luther's thunderstorm experience:

A direct confrontation with death and imminent judgement aroused in him the desire to make a radical and determined attempt to arm himself, if he were given time, for this eventuality, so that when the time came he could face the inescapable reality of God under different conditions. He later summed up his purpose, no doubt accurately, in these words: "I want to escape hell by being a monk."<sup>5</sup>

Luther hoped to find favor in the sight of God by works. As a monk, he was thoroughly dedicated to acts of piety, and therefore constantly prayed, fasted, and attended mass. Luther writes of his diligence:

I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.<sup>6</sup>

His observance of the Augustinian rule made his life appear holy and righteous. Nevertheless, he did not achieve by these acts peace of mind and stability; rather he became more inclined to both melancholy and despair. Constantly aware of his own sins he experienced moments



of acute and painful hopelessness. Luther's description reveals their intensity:

I too know a man, who, as he has affirmed, has frequently suffered such punishments, admittedly for only a short time, but so monstrous and hellish that no tongue could tell, no pen write and no one believe who had not experienced them himself; they were such that if these pains had been borne to the end, or had lasted for only half an hour, or for no more than the tenth part of an hour, he would have been completely overcome.<sup>7</sup>

Luther's extended periods of despair remained with him until his death. In 1527, several years after his resolute stand at Worms, Luther wrote a letter to a friend describing what had been, for him, a time of profound desperation:

For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy of God.<sup>8</sup>

Although he found tremendous consolation in his discovery of the Scriptural assertion "the righteous shall live by faith," his sensitivity to his own sin forced him to return continually to this hope of the imputed righteousness of Christ to overcome his often violent moods.

The proposition "the righteous shall live by faith" remained the single most important weapon which Luther used to combat his obsession with sin. However, there were two other significant factors which aided Luther in his battle. The first was his perception of the Word of God,





and the second was his concept of the devil.

Luther unceasingly turned to the Scriptures to find rest, peace, and confidence during his times of trial. In the Word of God alone he found reason for hope during experiences of immense despair. Luther desired to make the Scriptures become a part of him:

His lifelong aspiration was to sink  
'with quiet spirit' into these depths  
until he had fathomed and seen and  
felt what lay hidden [in the Bible].  
It was in this sense that he said that  
one must 'imagine' a text, or 'build  
it into one's heart.' He intended  
these expressions quite literally.<sup>9</sup>

To achieve the desire of incorporating the Word of God into his being, Luther began both to memorize Scripture and recite passages to himself out loud. Luther felt that this technique would help to "imprint [the words] not only in his memory but on his will."<sup>10</sup>

Reminiscent of the thought expressed by the Psalmist in Psalm 119:9, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word," Luther desired the Word of God to become one with his being; thereby his certainty in the mercy of God would be reinforced.

Luther apprehended the devil as an objective reality; consequently his conflict with evil was often very frightening. Upon returning from Wartburg to Wittenberg Luther entered into debate with Stubner, the leader of a growing sect. As the debate progressed, Stubner, feigning



divine inspiration, began to predict Luther's attitude.

Luther's response was immediate:

"God chastise thee Satan!" At these words  
all the prophets were as if distracted.  
"The Spirit, the Spirit!" cried they.  
Luther, adopting that cool tone of contempt  
and that cutting and homely language so  
familiar to him, said, "I slap your spirit  
on the snout."<sup>11</sup>

Luther often considered himself to be in direct,  
personal combat with the devil. On numerous occasions  
while imprisoned at Wartburg Luther felt sure the devil  
was present and disrupting his work.<sup>12</sup> Luther understood  
the Christian soul to be protected in God's fortress;  
however, although thus protected, the soul could be  
under constant assault by legions of demons. Therefore,  
according to Luther, the Christian life was a continual  
battle against principalities, powers of darkness, and  
the 'prince of this world.' In 1527, shortly after the  
terrible depression which brought him, as it were, to the  
gates of death and hell, he composed a hymn which clearly  
reveals his perception of Christian life as a battle, and  
the reality of the devil. In the hymn "A Safe Stronghold  
our God is Still," Luther writes:

And were this world all devils o'er  
And watching to devour us,  
We lay it not to heart so sore:  
Not they can overpower us.  
And let the prince of ill  
Look grim as e'er he will,  
He harms us not a whit;  
For why? - his doom is writ;  
A word shall quickly slay him.<sup>13</sup>



In these lines Luther discloses two propositions crucial to his understanding of Christian warfare: the objective reality of a personal, spiritual foe, and the power of Scripture to "slay" that foe. His belief in a spiritual adversary sheds important light on understanding his inward struggle. Luther was tempted and tried by the devil that he might discover an important truth, the role of temptation in the life of the Christian:

If I live longer, he said, I would like to write a book about Anfechtungen, for without them no man can understand Scripture, faith, the fear or the love of God. He does not know the meaning of hope who was never subject to temptations.<sup>14</sup>

and again:

David must have been plagued by a very fearful devil. He could not have had such profound insights if he had not experienced great assaults.<sup>15</sup>

The tension and struggle in Luther's experience of the Christian faith is evident in his theological writings. Friedrich Schlegel writes of this conflict:

For in almost all his writings we find ourselves face to face with his great inward struggle. It is as though within this human soul, so powerful and so richly endowed by God and by nature, two worlds were in conflict, both seeking to tear at each other. Everywhere in his writings there is a struggle between light and darkness, between a firm and unshakable faith and his equally wild and unrestrained passion, between God and himself.<sup>16</sup>

From the depths of Luther's struggles, and his commitment





to seek the truth in Scripture, evolved Luther's understanding of the Word of God, the law and the Gospel, and the theology of the Cross.

While in the monastery, Luther, plagued by all manner of illness and depression, was encouraged by Staupitz to study the Scriptures.<sup>17</sup> Luther accepted the challenge, and the results of his efforts soon became evident. As his reputation grew at Wittenberg he was invited to preach at the chapel. D'Aubigne describes the effect of Luther's words:

Soon the little chapel could not hold the hearers who crowded to it. The council of Wittenberg then nominated Luther their chaplain, and invited him to preach in the city church. The impression he there produced was greater still. The energy of his genius, the eloquence of his style, and the excellency of the doctrines that he proclaimed, equally astonished his hearers.<sup>18</sup>

Staupitz, recognizing Luther's immense ability to teach the Word of God, encouraged him to become a Doctor of the Holy Scriptures. Although Luther did not feel worthy of pursuing such an important degree, those in authority insisted that he do so. On October 18, 1512, Luther was received as a licentiate in divinity, and took the oath: "I swear to defend the evangelical truth with all my might."<sup>19</sup> D'Aubigne writes:

[Luther] was made a biblical doctor, and not a doctor of sentences, and was thus called to devote himself to the study of



the Bible, and not to that of human traditions. He then pledged himself by an oath, as he himself relates, to his well-beloved and Holy Scriptures. He promised to preach them faithfully, to teach them with purity, to study them all his life, and to defend them, both in disputation and in writing, against all false teachers, so far as God should give him ability.<sup>20</sup>

Luther's position with respect to the Word of God, (Sola Scriptura), eventually brought him before Charles V, the greatest German prince, and hostile theologians, with the order to retract or be excommunicated. Luther, confident that his doctrinal position was sound, replied to the Emperor:

Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning - unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted - and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience.<sup>21</sup>

Luther's stand before Charles V reveals an important aspect of Luther's doctrine of Scripture. Not only does Luther contend for the authority of the Word of God, placing it above political rule, church officials and church doctrine, he also insists that Scripture must



become a part of the experience of the individual. Thus Luther cannot retract both from the position of maintaining doctrinal integrity and as a matter of conscience. Ebeling writes:

For Luther, theology was two things at once. It was his calling, his trade, a subject of which he had a thorough understanding, and which it was his duty to understand thoroughly. It was also the essence of what is decisive in human existence, the truth that brought assurance, certainty, salvation and life.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, for Luther, the proper study of the Word of God involves both the acquisition of Biblical knowledge and allowing the Scriptures to affect one's own existence, one's own personal experience. According to Luther, one must, in a personal, emotional way, respond to the Word of God: "For Luther, theology as the object of intellectual inquiry and theology as the sphere of a personal encounter, formed an indivisible unity."<sup>23</sup>

Luther's desire to experience the Word of God in a personal way informed his method of interpretation. Unless the Holy Spirit taught and implanted the Scriptures within the believer, they would remain remote, external, and distant. Thus the true theologian becomes reliant upon the Holy Spirit to reveal the Word of God:

Thus the Spirit must be drawn out from the letter. The Spirit is concealed in the letter. But this must be understood





in a profound and theologically very significant sense. The letter is not a good word, for it is the law of the wrath of God. But the Spirit is a good word, good news, the gospel, because it is the word of grace.<sup>24</sup>

Luther understands the Holy Spirit to be life-giving, whereas the law brings death. As Ebeling points out, Luther's comprehension of the letter and the Spirit takes on the original Pauline concept of the law and grace, and therefore Luther's principle of Biblical exegesis constantly aided him in furthering his understanding of justification.<sup>25</sup>

Luther understands Jesus Christ to be the fundamental meaning behind the Holy Scriptures, and therefore his perception of the Old Testament is not orientated to Moses, but to Christ. In this way Luther maintains internal unity between the Old and New Testaments. Some groups, such as the anabaptists, reject the God of the Old Testament, preferring the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount. Luther never disregarded the law of Moses on the basis of his doctrine of the Spirit. Rather, Luther interpreted the Old Testament in terms of promise and fulfillment. Therefore, in the events recorded in the Old Testament Luther saw "types" of Christ. This method of interpretation is evident in a comment on the "brazen serpent" found in Luther's commentary on Galatians:



Faith as a steadfast beholding of Christ alone was notably and livelily represented by the brazen serpent, which is a figure of Christ. Moses commanded the Jews which were stung of serpents in the desert, to do nothing else but steadfastly behold the brazen serpent, and not to turn away their eyes . . . So if I would find comfort when my conscience is afflicted, or when I am at the point of death, I must do nothing but apprehend Christ . . . Besides him I see nothing, I hear nothing.<sup>26</sup>

Luther's theology of the Scriptures illuminates his position with respect to the law and the Gospel. Stressing the importance of a right understanding of the relationship between the law and the Gospel, Luther writes:

Virtually the whole of the Scriptures and the understanding of the whole of theology depends upon the true understanding of the law and the Gospel. Anyone who can properly distinguish the Gospel from the law may thank God and know that he is a theologian.<sup>27</sup>

Luther's perception of the law and the Gospel is integral to his theology. As stated earlier, Luther was plagued with the question of justification. His own experience of life constantly revealed to him the reality of his sin. This reality did not diminish upon entering the monastery; rather, his inward struggle to understand the relationship between pious acts and mercy, between the law and the Gospel, intensified.

By means of constant study of the Word of God and the



presupposition that what the Word contained is true and therefore trustworthy, Luther developed his theology of the law and the Gospel. For Luther, the law reveals to man what it is God expects of him. Luther writes:

The law commands and requires us to do certain things. The law is thus directed solely to our behaviour and consists in making requirements. For God speaks through the law, saying "Do this, avoid that, this is what I expect of you."<sup>28</sup>

Thus the content of the law is the commands (Decalogue) and ordinances of God; those things He requires of all with respect to both behaviour and attitude. The function of the law, for Luther, is twofold. The 'civil' use of the law is that use which maintains order with respect to community life. However, the second, more important use of the law, the theological or 'proper' use, is to disclose to man his sin:

Therefore the true function and the chief and proper use of the law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well-deserved wrath of God.<sup>29</sup>

Integral to Luther's theology of the law is the doctrine of original sin. For Luther, man is totally depraved, completely incapable of ascending to God. Therefore, human works become impotent, completely incapable of justifying man before a holy God. Original sin affects both man's intellect and his will, a point





which Luther makes in his Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans: " original sin is an inclination to evil, a distaste for good, a boredom with truth and wisdom, an attachment to error and darkness, a hatred and avoidance of good works and an onrush towards evil."<sup>30</sup> Thus Luther's concern with original sin involves the whole man, his inner heart and his outward actions and behaviour; man is completely depraved. God's redemption, therefore, disregards any personal effort on the part of the sinner. Man can only be passive and receive grace from God.

For Luther, the Gospel is the good news of God, the proclamation of the grace of God, of the message that Christ has forgiven all. Luther writes:

the Gospel does not teach me what to do but what someone else has done for me, namely, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death.<sup>31</sup>

and again:

The Gospel is that Word whereby God discloses His inmost heart, manifesting Himself a gracious God, who wills to deal with us, not as an angry Judge, but as a merciful Father.<sup>32</sup>

The grace of God, which is the message of the Gospel, is something which God gives to man. The sinner never receives this gift on merit; rather, it is given freely. Luther writes:

We work nothing, we render nothing to God, but only, we receive and suffer the action of another, namely



God. Therefore it pleases one to call this righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness passive righteousness.<sup>33</sup>

The Gospel which Luther posits becomes a stumbling block for the Antinomians, who propose that Christians are free from moral law. Luther was completely opposed to this position. Rather, Luther contends that good works are necessary to the Christian life, but only occur after justification: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man performs good works."<sup>34</sup> Man, after he has been saved, desires to serve, to perform good deeds. To clarify this, Luther often refers to the image of a fruit-bearing tree "which portrays the precedence of the person over works."<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, faith is an active, vital force, always seeking an opportunity to do good. Nevertheless, the stress is always on salvation first, followed by good works. Ebeling writes:

Man must know that he is ultimately - that is, in the sight of God - affirmed, accepted and loved, in order to have freedom to love, and to carry out works that are completely real and truly good.<sup>36</sup>

The seeking after and performance of good works is not to be confused with man actively cooperating with Christ's redemptive act. McDonough writes: "Thus the Christian's good works, his striving for perfection, his struggle against sin, his eschatological attente of final sanctification have no share in his justification by faith."<sup>37</sup>



"Justification by faith" means the sinner believes and accepts the completed work of Christ on the cross as the total expiation of his sins. The comprehension of this point is crucial to Luther's theology. Thus he writes: "True theology and knowledge of God lies in the crucified Christ."<sup>38</sup> This kind of theology, as Ebeling points out, is truly practical: "It leads into experience, and is existential theology."<sup>39</sup> Luther's theologia crucis embodies two important, practical, epistemological considerations: knowledge of God by means of creation and knowledge of God by means of revelation.

The knowledge of God which man acquires through the consideration of creation leads to what Luther designates as the "theology of glory."<sup>40</sup> This knowledge is gained through reason, and it leads man astray: "It knows that God exists. But who or what person it may be who is properly called God, it does not know."<sup>41</sup> Speculation on the character of God derived from the observation of creation reveals some of the attributes of God: His power, justice, goodness, and creativeness. However, according to Luther, this knowledge does not make one wise; rather, it leads to further corruption.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to the theology of glory is Luther's theology of the Cross. This position is both dependent upon divine revelation and the Holy Spirit as a teacher or guide, and it is "the beginning of all true knowledge of





God and man."<sup>43</sup> Ebeling, in comparing Luther's theology of the Cross to the theology of grace, writes:

[the theology of the cross] is the complete opposition of speculation concerning God in His nakedness, God in His majesty, and points us towards God who came in the flesh and was therefore clothed in promises, who came close to us, imparted himself to us, and was thereby revealed.<sup>44</sup>

Comprehension of Luther's concept of the "hidden God," a God concealed in His 'contrary,' is crucial to Luther's theology of the Cross. Luther explains this concept of the "hidden God" in his lectures on the Psalms:

If under the glory of the flesh God gave the glory of the Spirit, and under the riches of the flesh the riches of the Spirit, and under the graciousness and honour of the flesh gave the grace and honour of the Spirit, then the latter would rightly be described as profoundly concealed. But as it is, since He gives it under His contrary, and contradicts what is signified by the sign itself, it is not merely profoundly but far too profoundly concealed. For who could realize that someone who is visibly humbled, tempted, rejected, and slain, is at the same time and to the utmost degree inwardly exalted, comforted, accepted and brought to life, unless this was taught by the Spirit through faith.<sup>45</sup>

Thus to understand the revelation of God on the Cross there must be faith. This faith discloses what the Suffering Servant had to endure to redeem man from death to eternal life. Luther writes: "Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in



His glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humanity and shame of the cross."<sup>46</sup> Only by understanding, by means of the Holy Spirit, the work of Christ on the Cross does man come to a true realization of his utter sinfulness, the value of the price that had to be paid to free him from bondage to sin, and the mercy of God. Without this knowledge man cannot be saved. Furthermore, the revelation of the "hidden God" on the Cross also discloses important truths concerning the Christian life and relationships.

The Christian, according to Luther, does not flee the sufferings of this world. Rather, his life reflects the Cross of Christ. He becomes a partaker of the sufferings of the Cross, he is crucified with Christ, he dies daily. Just as God must be known in His suffering and death, in a similar way the Christian life must reflect this characteristic of its Saviour. Luther was convinced that God could only be found in suffering and in the Cross. That God should choose to reveal Himself in this way ennobles suffering, and therefore, for the Christian, suffering becomes good. For Luther, the wisdom of God is revealed through the weak and shameful things of this world, a thought reminiscent of both Paul and Isaiah.

The centrality of the Cross to Luther's theological positions reveals the emphasis he places on Christ.



Christ informs and unifies his understanding of the authority of the Scriptures, He is central to his perception of the law and the Gospel, and of course He is integral to his theology of the Cross. Indeed, for Luther, to take Christ out of the Scriptures or out of theology, leaves nothing. Christ does not just figure heavily in the theological positions which Luther ascribed to, but is integral to every aspect of his life. Again, the unity between theology and experience is everywhere evident in Luther's writing. In writing to a friend, Luther discloses his personal testimony:

I also am accustomed, my dear Brenz, in order to understand better this problem to imagine as if there exists no quality in my heart which bears the name faith or charity, but in their place, I put Jesus Christ, and I say: This is my justice. It is He, Himself, who is the quality and my formal justice; so that, in this way, I shall free and rid myself of the law and works, and even of the contemplation of that objective Christ, who is perceived as a doctor or giver, But I want Him, by Himself, to be, for me, both the gift itself and the doctrine itself, so that I may possess all things in Him. Thus He says 'I am the way, the truth and the life'; but he does not say: I give unto you the way, the truth, and the life, as if, standing outside of me He worked such things within me. It is within me that He should be, should remain, live and speak.<sup>47</sup>

Luther desired to be possessed by Christ and consumed with a zeal for His work. This goal was not static, but





constantly ongoing. The Christian life, according to Luther, "is constantly in movement, in progress towards righteousness."<sup>48</sup> Luther writes:

For it is not sufficient to have done something, and now to rest . . . But this present life is a kind of movement and passage, or transition. . . a pilgrimage from this world into the world to come, which is eternal rest. The active life is constantly a progress from act to act, from potentiality to potentiality, or as that passage describes it, from understanding to understanding, from faith to faith, from glory to glory, from knowledge to knowledge.<sup>48</sup>

Luther, a pilgrim journeying towards the promised "rest" in "the world to come," kept the reality of the person and work of Christ always before him. Consequently his theological position is intimately bound up with his concept of the Christian experience.

The four elements of Luther and his theology discussed above profoundly influenced Bunyan. However, Luther is not the only theologian to affect the Puritan writer. Calvin's understanding of predestination, the subject of the next chapter, finds significant expression in Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress.



## II. Theological Background: Calvin

Certain elements of Luther's theology are reflected in Bunyan's works, and, similarly, Calvin's theology also influenced the Puritan writer. Crucial to a discussion of the impact of Calvin's theology upon Bunyan is Calvin's understanding of predestination.<sup>1</sup> His knowledge of this concept is of major importance to later Puritan writers and finds significant aesthetic expression in many Puritan works, not the least of which are Bunyan's Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress.

Calvin's analysis of predestination neatly breaks down into several stages, each important to a complete understanding of the concept and its implications. If one is of the elect, and therefore not reprobate, four important stages will follow: vocation, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Calvin understands predestination to possess both great "utility" and many "pleasant fruits," and therefore that: "[great] ignorance of this principle [predestination] detracts from the glory of God, and impairs true humility."<sup>2</sup> He acknowledges the subject to be both difficult and perplexing, yet considers that



there is a great need for a proper explication of the concept. Calvin's assertion that predestination is not to be avoided or neglected, but rather confronted, separates him from leading theologians of his day, such as Melanchthon, who thought predestination did not merit extended discussion.<sup>3</sup> Calvin offers two reasons to promote the study of predestination: it maintains a proper sense of humility in the believer, because he acknowledges his salvation to be entirely dependent upon the mercy of God in electing him, and it establishes the certainty of salvation, which brings peace:

Those who preclude access, and would not have anyone to obtain a taste of this doctrine, are equally unjust to God and men, there being no other means of humbling us as we ought, or making us feel how much we are bound to him. Nor, indeed, have we elsewhere any sure ground of confidence. This we say on the authority of Christ, who, to deliver us from all fear, and render us invincible amid our many dangers, snares, and mortal conflicts, promises safety to all that the Father hath taken under his protection (John x. 26).

(III, xxi, 1)

Before Calvin attempts an explanation of the difficult subject of predestination, he mentions two classes of men who are inappropriately involved with the question of predestination. The first group he addresses are the curious, those who seek to acquire an understanding of the hidden things of God only to satisfy a vain desire for





knowledge. For these men, such a study is "perilous," they wander down "forbidden paths," and eventually end up in an "inextricable labyrinth" (III, xxi, 1). They desire information beyond what the Scriptures disclose, and in seeking that information they fall into a bottomless "abyss." Calvin warns this group to avoid unnecessary study of the mysteries of God, and thereby reveals the respect with which he treats the Scriptures:

If we give due weight to the consideration, that the word of the Lord is the only way which can conduct us to the investigation of whatever it is lawful for us to hold with regard to him - is the only light which can enable us to discern what we ought to see with regard to him, it will curb and restrain all presumption. For it will show us that the moment we go beyond the bounds of the word we are out of the course, in darkness, and must every now and then stumble, go astray, and fall. Let it, therefore, be our first principle that to desire any other knowledge of predestination than that which is expounded by the word of God, is no less infatuated than to walk where there is no path, or to seek light in darkness.

(III, xxi, 2)

The second group avoids study of predestination, not because the concept does not merit understanding, but because they think such mysteries should "be treated with moderation" (III, xxi, 3). These men err on the side of timidity. Calvin appeals again to a proper approach and respect of the Scriptures to refute their position:



For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which as nothing useful and necessary to be known has been omitted, so nothing is taught but what it is of importance to know . . . Let us, I say, allow the Christian to unlock his mind and ears to all the words of God which are addressed to him, provided he do it with this moderation - viz. that whenever the Lord shuts his sacred mouth, he also desists from inquiry.

(III, xxi, 3)

Once Calvin explains his reason for promoting the study of predestination and refutes the objections several groups raise concerning such study, he offers this definition of the concept:

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death.

(III, xxi, 5)

According to Calvin, the truth of predestination is self-evident; it is too "certain to be shaken," and too "clear to be overborne by human authority" (III, xxii, 1).

Calvin refutes those who would argue this reality by constantly returning to a concept central to his theology, the sovereignty of God: "But if the fact is certain, what can they gain by quarrelling with God? . . . God has always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he would"



(III, xxii, 1). At the conclusion of the section of The Institutes of the Christian Religion which concerns predestination, Calvin again appeals to the sovereignty of God:

Finally, after all that has been adduced on this side and on that, let it be our conclusion to feel overawed with Paul at the great depth, and if petulant tongues will still murmur, let us not be ashamed to join in his exclamation, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom.ix. 20). Truly does Augustine maintain that it is perverse to measure divine by the standard of human justice (De Prædest. et Gra. c. ii).

(III, xxiv, 17)

God's tribunal is "inaccessible," his ways are "inscrutable," and his pleasure is "sovereign." Furthermore: "When God is said to visit in mercy or harden whom he will, men are reminded that they are not to seek for any cause beyond his will" (III, xxii, 11).

Central to predestination is election and damnation. All men are sinners, because all men are born under the curse of Original Sin. Their natures are utterly depraved and corrupt:

After the heavenly image in man was effaced, he not only was himself punished by a withdrawal of the ornaments in which he had been arrayed . . . but he involved his posterity also, and plunged them in the same wretchedness.

(II, i, 5)





In spite of the reality of man's sinful state before God, God, prior to the "foundation of the world" chose whom He would save and whom He would damn. Because this decision was made prior to creation, God precludes salvation by works: "By saying they were elected before the foundation of the world, he takes away all reference to worth. For what ground of distinction was there between persons who as yet existed not?" (III, xxii, 2). Upon what basis, then, are men chosen either to eternal life or eternal death? Calvin writes: "the only ground on which he will show mercy to one rather than to another is his sovereign pleasure" (III, xxii, 6).

The Christian life begins with an awareness of predestination and original sin. Man must first be conscious of his sin and need for expiation by the blood of Christ. Once sufficiently overwhelmed with a knowledge of unrighteousness, there follows a desire to know if one is elect or damned. The first step in this process is to read the Bible and to hear sermons. The words of the Bible and the thoughts of God as expressed in sermons are only efficacious for the elect:

By external preaching all are called to faith and repentance, and that yet the Spirit of faith and repentance is not given to all . . . For the present let it suffice to observe, that though the word of the gospel is addressed generally to all, yet the gift of faith is rare.

(III, xxii, 10)



Having responded and acted upon the "heard" Word, the problem of maintaining a sense of assurance and certainty of election arises. There are several signs which separate the elect from the damned. First, only the elect possesses abiding faith:

Meanwhile, we must remember that however feeble and slender the faith of the elect may be, yet as the Spirit of God is to them a sure earnest and seal of their adoption, the impression once engraven can never be effaced from their hearts, whereas the light which glimmers in the reprobate is afterwards quenched.

(III, ii, 12)

Thus the elect is eternally secure; therefore, come what may, the elect never abandons faith in Jesus Christ. This does not mean, however, that the elect does not experience fears, anxiety, or doubt. Believers do struggle with sin and doubt. Nevertheless: "whatever be the mode in which they are assailed, we deny that they fall off and abandon that sure confidence which they have formed in the mercy of God" (III, ii, 17). By way of clarification Calvin offers the example of King David. Throughout the Psalms there is a continuous record of the many complaints, fears, and pains of the king, yet, in the midst of his battles faith sustains him: "Thus David, when he seemed overwhelmed, ceased not by urging himself forward to ascend to God" (III, ii, 17). In contrast with David, Calvin offers Ahaz as an example of a reprobate in trial:





Isaiah is sent to relieve the anxiety of an impious and hypocritical king, and addresses him in these terms:

"Take heed, and be quiet; fear not," (Is. vii. 4). How did Ahaz act? As has already been said, his heart was shaken as a tree is shaken by the wind: though he heard the promise, he ceased not to tremble. This, therefore, is the proper hire and punishment of unbelief, so to tremble as in the day of trial to turn away from God, who gives access to himself only by faith.

(III, ii, 17)

Calvin offers the function of the Word of God as another sign which distinguishes the elect from the reprobate. The believer continually turns to the Scriptures to learn what is necessary for sound life and doctrine, and to fortify himself in trial: "faith has no less need of the word than the fruit of a tree has of a living root; because, as David testifies, none can hope in God but those who know his name" (III, ii, 31). The Holy Spirit teaches the Word to the believer, for without His aid it would be inefficacious, a useless theology unable to effect a change (III, i, 3). Because the Spirit of God does not teach the reprobate the Scriptures, he never clearly understands the thoughts contained within the Word: "I deny that the reprobate ever advance so far as to penetrate to that secret revelation which Scripture reserves for the elect only" (III, ii, 12). Because the Holy Spirit does not draw the





reprobate to God, he never comes to know God (III, ii, 34).

A final evidence of election rather than damnation is the presence of hope. Insofar as faith is a firm persuasion of the truth of God, hope is inseparable from faith: "hope is nothing more than the expectation of those things which faith previously believes to have been truly promised by God" (III, ii, 42). To clarify further the roles of faith and hope, Calvin posits:

Thus, faith believes that God is true; hope expects that in due season he will manifest his truth. Faith believes that he is our Father; hope expects that he will always act the part of a Father towards us. Faith believes that eternal life has been given to us; hope expects that it will one day be revealed. Faith is the foundation on which hope rests; hope nourishes and sustains faith.

(III, ii, 42)

Because the reprobate does not possess a true and saving faith in God, he cannot attain the quality of hope Calvin defines in the passage cited above. Furthermore, this kind of hope cannot be imitated; thus it is obvious, especially in times of trial, who is elect and who is not.

Vocation immediately follows election. To a large extent these two stages interact. Vocation is the call of God, not the general, universal call, but rather an efficacious call, and it transforms the person into one who believes in the completed work of Christ on the Cross:

In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election,



and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished by the attainment of glory. But as the Lord seals his elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the reprobate either from the knowledge of his name or the sanctification of his Spirit, he by these marks in a manner discloses the judgement which awaits them.

(III, xxi, 7)

In this way special election, otherwise hidden in God, is made known. Once the call is accepted, the elect is admitted into the family of God, united and made one with God (III, xxiv, 1).

The role of the Spirit is crucial to the calling of the elect. Preaching of the Word must be accompanied by the Holy Spirit's illumination of the Word:

Therefore, this inward calling is an infallible pledge of salvation. Hence the words of John, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John iii. 24). And lest the flesh should glory, in at least responding to him, when he calls and spontaneously offers himself, he affirms that there would be no ears to hear, no eyes to see, did not he give them. And he acts not according to the gratitude of each, but according to his election.

(III, xxiv, 2)

God's call of the elect is completely independent of the elect's works or character. Similarly, the damnation of the reprobate is independent of his works or character. This necessitates a discussion of justification, the next



stage in the development of Calvin's understanding of predestination.

Central to Calvin's theology, and in consonance with his concept of the sovereignty of God, is his conviction that the main concern of man is to give God glory. Of justification, Calvin writes: "those who hold that man has no ability in himself to do righteousness, hold what is most necessary to be known for salvation" (II, iv, 6). Thus Calvin rejects any theological position which includes man's character, work, or ability in the attainment of salvation. Man is redeemed only on the basis of what God, in His mercy, has done for him, (both in election and the death of Christ on the Cross). Therefore, man must ascribe to God all the glory in his salvation. Leith, in "The Doctrine of the Will in The Institutes of the Christian Religion," writes:

Calvin set himself in opposition to every form of synergism or Pelagianism that seeks to divide the work of salvation between God and man. He was convinced that any faith that does not rely wholly upon God lives in anxiety about its own spiritual condition, that if God only acts when we begin to act, or if he continues to act only if we fulfill certain conditions, our real dependence is upon ourselves, not upon God. Calvin found peace and confidence in ascribing the whole of salvation to God.<sup>4</sup>

For Calvin a proper understanding of justification is integral to a sound theology: "it is the principle ground on which religion must be supported" (III, xi, 1).





He places considerable emphasis upon the legal aspect of justification: "Justification is a judicial act in which God, as judge, absolves the accused."<sup>5</sup> Christ's work, His obedience to the Father in becoming flesh and dying for man's sins, is all which makes justification possible. It is not a combination of faith and works. According to Calvin, faith itself is a gift of God.

Mackinnon posits in Calvin and the Reformation: "a necessary fruit of justification is Christian liberty."<sup>6</sup> As justified, the elect is free from the law, although it still functions as a guide to proper moral behaviour. The elect's relationship to God is also changed, he has become part of His family. God is his Father and no longer only his Master. This freedom, however, is not to be understood as an opportunity for sin (III, xix, 10).

Once the elect accepts God's mercy, he is justified. Justification is a single event, and, as stated above, the elect never loses his new legal status before God. At this point in Calvin's system, sanctification, the next stage in predestination, becomes important. Sanctification is the process by which man is transformed, by the Spirit of God, from glory to glory.

Packer, in "Calvin the Theologian," writes:

Calvin wrote what was in effect the first-ever theological study of the Christian life, the little treatise in Institutio III, vi-x . . . These chapters, with the rest of the



material on the doctrine and life of faith which Institutio III contains, became the fountainhead of the massive and in many ways classical developments in the fields of ethics and sanctification which occupied Reformed theologians, particularly English-speaking ones, for a century after Calvin's death.<sup>7</sup>

After Calvin, in this section of The Institutes of the Christian Religion, defines and justifies his purpose for including a short, practical treatise on Christian living, he develops three major themes: self-denial, cross-bearing, and meditation on eternal life.

Calvin states his purpose in section one of chapter six: "For me it will be sufficient to point out the method by which a pious man may be taught how to frame his life aright, and briefly lay down some universal rule by which he may not improperly regulate his conduct."

Calvin is concerned with the pragmatic issues of Christian living. He writes:

Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life; is not apprehended by the intellect and memory merely, like other branches of learning; but is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds its seat and habitation in the inmost recesses of the heart.

(III, vi, 4)

The Christian's presuppositions must be transformed into observable, practical conduct. As this transformation occurs the elect becomes more like Christ. This process alone changes the believer from "glory to glory."

The elect must possess a love of righteousness. Only



the pure in heart will inhabit the holy city of Jerusalem. The elect's righteousness, of course, is the imputed righteousness of Christ. This righteousness must be expressed in daily life: "For to what end were we rescued from the iniquity and pollution of the world into which we were plunged, if we allow ourselves, during our whole lives, to wallow in them" (III, vi, 2)? Although the believer constantly strives to become more Christ-like, he is not without temptations, trials and set-backs. According to Calvin, to be like Jesus is the goal: "Let us set this before our eyes as the end at which we ought constantly to aim. Let it be regarded as the goal towards which we are to run" (III, vi, 5). The elect's life is to give glory to God, and this glory is revealed more clearly as the believer progresses in sanctification. It is Calvin's position that none of the elect "travel so badly as not daily to make some degree of progress" (III, vi, 5).

The first theme Calvin develops in his discourse on sanctification is self-denial. To establish the Scriptural basis, Calvin again turns to the sovereignty of God. The believer does not belong to himself, but to God:

We are not our own; therefore, neither is our own reason or will to rule our acts and counsels. We are not our own; therefore, let us not make it our end to seek what may be agreeable to our carnal nature. We are not our own; therefore, as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that





are ours. On the other hand, we  
are God's; let us, therefore, live  
and die to him.

(III, vii, 1)

Because the elect belongs to God, he is not to seek that which pleases him, but rather that which pleases God, to promote His glory. For this to be achieved, the elect must turn from the things of this world and meditate upon the things of God. By so doing he denies himself and seeks God.

A benefit of directing one's thoughts to God is self-control. Calvin perceives "a world of iniquity treasured up in the human soul." Freedom from this iniquity is attained by denying oneself and following God:

Nor can you find any other remedy  
for this than to deny yourself,  
renounce your own reason, and  
direct your whole mind to the pur-  
suit of those things which the Lord  
requires of you, and which you are  
to seek only because they are  
pleasing to Him.

(III, vii, 2)

To attain this discipline of self, patient endurance in all trials is necessary. Ability to endure is possible only because of the sovereignty of God. The elect knows God to be the supreme ruler of the universe, he learns to happily and cheerfully accept his lot because it comes to him from God. Thus, if the lot includes persecution, in meekness the elect shows kindness and good-will to all, knowing he is not persecuted outside of the direct will



of God. If poverty befalls the elect he learns to be content with little, in all things acknowledging the blessings of God:

In short, whatever happens, knowing that it is ordered by the Lord, he will receive it with a placid and grateful mind, and will not contumaciously resist the government of him, at whose disposal he has placed himself and all that he has.

(III, vii, 10)

In keeping with the theme of self-denial is the theme of cross-bearing. Calvin exhorts those whom God has chosen to prepare for a hard, laborious, and troubled life full of many and varied evils (III, viii, 1). This reality should not surprise the elect, because Jesus Christ lived a life of suffering; indeed, "his whole life was nothing else than a kind of perpetual cross" (III, viii, 1). As the elect is destined to conform to Him, his life must reflect the suffering of the cross.

Cross-bearing teaches the disciple two important lessons: obedience and humility. Of Christ's obedience Calvin declares: "the only thing which made it necessary for our Lord to undertake to bear the cross, was to testify and prove his obedience to the Father" (III, viii, 2). The elect is to bear the burdens of this life patiently, "because impatience is rebellion against the justice of God" (III, viii, 11). The trials and sufferings of this life are the "lash" of God. This lash is administered to



train the believer in godly living and repentance:

Scripture states the difference between believers and unbelievers to be, that the latter, as the slaves of inveterate and deep-seated iniquity, only become worse and more obstinate under the lash; whereas the former, like free-born sons, turn to repentance.

(III, viii, 6)

Obedience to the "lash" of God creates humility in the believer. Continually aware of the sin harbored within his heart, the elect realizes his need of the mercy of God. Being predestined for salvation keeps the elect from total, irrevocable despair; however, it does not deliver him from experiencing godly pain and suffering, which leads to true humility:

We now see how many advantages are at once produced by the cross. Overturning the overweening opinion we form of our own virtue, and detecting the hypocrisy in which we delight, it removes our pernicious carnal confidence, teaching us, when thus humbled, to recline on God alone, so that we neither are oppressed nor despond.

(III, viii, 3)

In this section of the Institutes Calvin consumes a significant amount of space with the details of the pain and suffering every disciple of Christ encounters in this life. He also deals with the fact that the Christian life is best understood as a pilgrimage: "we must be pilgrims in the world" (III, vii, 3). As a pilgrim, the elect is on a journey. Through the process of sanctification he





progresses, each step moving him closer to the Celestial City and ultimate glorification. While embroiled in the tribulations of this world, the pilgrim can lose sight of the reality of heaven. He does this to the detriment of his sanctification. Therefore, Calvin's final major theme in this section on Christian living is the need for meditation on the world which is to come:

Whatever be the kind of tribulation with which we are afflicted, we should always consider the end of it to be, that we may be trained to despise the present, and thereby stimulated to aspire to the future life.

(III, ix, 1)

Keeping his affections on the Celestial City teaches the believer how to turn from the alluring temptations the present world offers. He then learns the value of the promise of heaven, and willingly goes without on earth to be satisfied in paradise. Sometimes, however, the believer possesses a desire for wealth, power and success. Forgetting heaven, he seeks happiness on earth: "To meet this disease, the Lord makes his people sensible of the vanity of the present life" (III, ix, 1). The vanity of the present life is disclosed through misery, and the inability of the world to offer and sustain deep and lasting peace. Learning the worthlessness of this world, the believer strives to free himself from the fetters which enslave him:



Let believers, then, in forming an estimate of this mortal life, and perceiving that in itself it is nothing but misery, make it their aim to exert themselves with greater alacrity, and less hindrance, in aspiring to the future and eternal life.

(III, ix, 4)

Eternal life is ultimately realized in glorification, the final stage of predestination. Glorification is the achievement of the promised reward, eternal life and concomitant joy in heaven. Prior to glorification, one must first be tried by the hardships of the present age:

For the Lord hath ordained, that those who are ultimately to be crowned in heaven must maintain a previous warfare on the earth, that they may not triumph before they have overcome the difficulties of war, and obtained the victory.

(III, ix, 3)

Glorification is an important element of predestination. It is the fulfillment of the judgement of God. Whereas on earth it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the elect from the reprobate, in eternity the difference will be clear. Hell awaits the reprobate, glory the elect: "He will come as a Redeemer to deliver us from an immense abyss of evil and misery, and lead us to the blessed inheritance of his life and glory" (III, ix, 5).

Calvin's understanding of predestination is the structural basis for Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan's artistic development of this



theological principle, together with Luther's influence in the areas of language and theology, will be examined in the following chapter.





### III. The Influence of Luther and Calvin on Grace Abounding

Grace Abounding is a spiritual autobiography, which contains an account of approximately thirty years of Bunyan's life, and was written during his first imprisonment. Bunyan wrote Grace Abounding to share his experience of regeneration, with the hope that by so doing others would be encouraged to begin, or continue in, the Christian journey:

[Grace Abounding] is a Relation of the work of God upon my own Soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my castings down, and raisings up; for he woundeth, and his hands make whole. . . Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not onely so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their Souls, by reading his work upon me.<sup>1</sup>

Bunyan's work is influenced by the stages of predestination Calvin delineates in The Institutes of the Christian Religion. Lynn Sadler writes:

Since Bunyan is concerned about establishing a working model of man's relationship with the deity, a duty incumbent upon Puritans generally, he consciously molded the narration of his experiences to delineate the standard Puritan pattern of conversion.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Luther's influence is evident in the diction Bunyan uses to explain his experiences with God



and the devil, and in the law and Gospel theology he reveals in Grace Abounding.

Predestination is integral to Grace Abounding; the concept controls the structure of the narrative. Therefore it is necessary for Bunyan to begin with the problem of election, and thus with a question which plagues the mind of all Calvinists, How does one know one is of the elect? The first step in answering this question is recognizing personal sin. Knowledge of personal unworthiness is crucial to Calvin's theology. Bunyan immediately informs the reader he is aware of his sinful nature:

it was my delight to be taken  
captive by the Devil at his will,  
2 Tim. 2. 26. Being filled with  
all unrighteousness; the which did  
also so strongly work, and put forth  
itself, both in my heart and life,  
and that from a childe, that I had but  
few Equals, (especially considering my  
years, which were tender, being few)  
both for cursing, swearing, lying and  
blaspheming the holy Name of God.

(4)

At nine or ten years of age Bunyan perceived himself as a slave to sin, completely unable to do anything good (7).

Once he is convinced of his wretched state, Bunyan acknowledges his unwillingness to conform to the will of God. He begins to revel in his sin: "I could my self sin with the greatest delight and ease, and also take pleasure in the vileness of my companions" (11). Confronted by God during a game of cat, Bunyan is forced to admit he is a "great and



grievous sinner." He decides, since he thinks himself beyond salvation, to continue in sin:

therefore I resolved in my mind I  
would go on in sin: for thought I,  
if the case be thus, my state is  
surely miserable; miserable if I  
leave my sins; and but miserable if  
I follow them: I can but be damned;  
and if I must be so, I had as good  
be damned for many sins, as be  
damned for few.

(23)

Bunyan carefully reveals, and possibly exaggerates, the vileness of his sins in order to disclose the magnitude of God's graciousness, patience and love. Only a great God can save "the chief of sinners."

In Calvin's theology, God's grace, for the elect, is irresistible. God calls His chosen people until they accept His mercy. Thus, to reveal God's patience in dealing with him, and His unwillingness to cease to pursue, Bunyan writes: "God did not utterly leave me, but followed still" (12). The patience of God is further disclosed by the number of times He preserved Bunyan's life: God saved him from drowning, being poisoned by an adder, and being killed while serving in the army. As Bunyan continued in his sin, God continued to follow him, creating circumstances which would encourage Bunyan to seek Him.

Bunyan's initial inclination to study Christianity occurred after his first marriage. His wife owned two Calvinist books, Arthur Dent's A Plaine Mans Pathway to





Heaven and Bishop Bayley's The Practice of Piety. These works, together with his wife's recounting of her father's life as a Christian, evoked Bunyan's desire to become religious, and attend church. His experience in the Church of England proved to be valueless, as his involvement in the traditions of the church obscured his need of Christ (17, 18, 19). Bunyan did not know of regeneration, and therefore began to depend on works:

Wherefore I fell to some outward Reformation, both in my words and life, and did set the Commandments before me for my way to Heaven: which Commandments I also did strive to keep: and, as I thought, did keep them pretty well sometimes. . . for then I thought I pleased God as well as any man in England.

(30)

Bunyan and his neighbours thought his life to be truly transformed because he gave up swearing, dancing, playing games and bell-ringing (32). This misunderstanding shows how easily legality is accepted as grace. In retrospect, Bunyan knew that at this time he was not saved: "But poor Wretch as I was, I was all this while ignorant of Jesus Christ, and going about to establish my own righteousness, and had perished therein, had not God in mercy shewed me more of my state of nature" (36). God's providence allowed Bunyan to travel to Bedford, where he chanced upon ladies discussing a "new birth." This experience was crucial to his own conversion, because it was in hearing their conversation Bunyan learned the



importance of the work of Christ. Bunyan's response to the conversation discloses important signs which distinguish the elect from the damned: his heart shakes, he is greatly affected by their words, and he continues to seek out people who speak of the new birth. Bunyan writes:

presently I found two things within me, at which I did sometimes marvel, (especially considering what a blind, ignorant, sordid, and ungodly Wretch but just before I was) the one was, a very great softness and tenderness of heart, which caused me to fall under the conviction of what by Scripture they asserted; and the other was, a great bending in my mind to a continual meditating upon them, and on all other good things which at any-time I heard or read of.

(41)

Bunyan's desire to increase in knowledge of the things of God altered his perception of the Scripture. Earlier he could not understand the Word of God; gradually he found the Bible becoming clearer to him:

And now, me thought, I began to look into the Bible with new eyes, and read as I never did before; and especially the Epistles of the Apostle S. Paul were sweet and pleasant to me: and indeed I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation, still crying out to God, that I might know the truth, and way to Heaven and Glory.

(46)

At this point in his soteriological journey, and in keeping with the concept of predestination, Bunyan is plagued with the question of election: "I could not rest content until



I did now come to some certain knowledge whether I had Faith or no" (49).

The problem of election constantly recurs in Grace Abounding. Bunyan recounts incidents of commanding dry places to be wet, and wet places dry, the vision of the mountain with the people of God in the sun and Bunyan desperately trying to join them, and moments of obsession with sin and despair. In all these examples his insecurity develops because "as yet [he] knew not where [he] was" (56). Not possessing a certainty of salvation, he was constantly "assaulted with fresh doubts" (57). The Scriptures did not bring him any peace:

With this Scripture I could not tell what to do; for I evidently saw that unless the great God of his infinite grace and bounty, had voluntarily chosen me to be a vessel of mercy, though I should desire, and long, and labour untill my heart did break, no good could come of it. Therefore, this would still stick with me, How can you tell you are elected? And what if you should not? how then?

(59)

The intensity of Bunyan's trials increased. He continually falls away from and returns to God, moving from despair to confidence, from "castings down to raisings up." These trials and tribulations are standard to predestination. Indeed, the severity of Bunyan's trials help establish his authority both as a Christian and as a preacher. Sadler writes: "In fact, the intensity of his trials establishes his credentials as a preacher in keeping





with the Puritan belief that God tested the faithful now as He had tested Abraham and Job."<sup>3</sup> However, Bunyan's close adaptation of his experience to the traditional pattern of conversion Calvin delineates in The Institutes, does not undercut the sincerity of his account. Bunyan's plain language and simple style maintain honesty and objectivity in the retelling of his moments of intense emotion.

A concern to discover whether one is elect or not is developed in the stage of vocation, following a conviction of original sin. According to Calvin, God must call the elect. The call seals the elect and excludes the reprobate. Bunyan was profoundly aware of the need to be called:

Here again I was at a very great stand, not knowing what to doe, fearing I was not called; for thought I, if I be not called, what then can doe me good? None but those who are effectually called, inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

(72)

Here Bunyan discloses his knowledge of Calvin's understanding of vocation. There are two calls: one is universal and one is effectual. Furthermore, to ascertain one's vocation, it is necessary to find evidence of appropriate signs in one's experience. Bunyan delineates two signs in Grace Abounding: successfully overcoming trials and the efficacy of the Word of God.

While Bunyan struggles with the problem of vocation,



his inward battle increases in intensity: "For about the space of a month after, a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me twenty times worse than all I had met with before" (96). This new storm brings Bunyan to fresh depths of misery and isolation: "I found myself as on a miry bog that shook if I did but stir, and as there left both of God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all good things" (82). The way in which Bunyan copes with this severe trial reveals his election. Calvin posits that during times of immense trial the elect and reprobate disclose their respective callings. The reprobate ultimately rejects God, unable to bear the severity of the test. The elect, however, continually turns to God in order to find strength to endure. Bunyan writes: "but I thank Christ Jesus, these things did not at present make me slack my crying, but rather did put me more upon it (like her who met with the Adulterer, Deut. 22. 25)" (111).

Bunyan's growing confidence in God seems to vanish as the test increases. Constantly tempted to "sell Christ" he finally gives in, thinks he rejects Christ, and thereby is plunged into deeper despair. While trapped in this "miry bog," however, Bunyan learns the necessity of depending on the righteousness of Christ alone; a knowledge necessary for justification:

But one day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my Conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence



fell upon my Soul, Thy righteousness is in Heaven. . . I also saw moreover, that it was not my good frame of Heart that made my Righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my Righteousness worse: for my Righteousness was Jesus Christ himself.

(229)

Once Bunyan discovers this truth his perspective of the Christian life is transformed: "Now did my chains fall off my Legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also fled away" (230). He experiences, thereafter, confidence in his election.

The second sign Bunyan offers as evidence of his vocation is the efficacy of the Word of God. In the effectual call the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures, thus allowing the believer to be transformed by them. His darkened mind begins to understand the concepts previously hidden from him in the Bible. Bunyan testifies that during his struggle to learn if he indeed was numbered among those "effectually called," God: "more fully and graciously discovered Himself unto him" (114). Furthermore, the Word of God consoles him in his despair:

It would be too long for me here to stay, to tell you in particular how God did set me down in all the things of Christ, and how he did, that he might so do, lead me into his words, yea and also how he did open them unto me, make them shine before me.

(126)





The stage of justification follows closely after Bunyan recognizes he has been called by God. God reveals to Bunyan through Bible study, persevering in trial, continual prayer, and meditation, that Christ is his righteousness, sanctification and redemption (230).

Bunyan deals in great detail with election, vocation, and justification in Grace Abounding. He writes very little on sanctification, and does not mention glorification in his spiritual autobiography.<sup>4</sup> With respect to sanctification he provides the reader with a brief account of his ministry and subsequent imprisonment.

In the discussion of ministry Bunyan discloses two signs important to Calvin's knowledge of sanctification: the sanctified are compassionate people, and willing to forsake all to gain Christ. Bunyan writes of his love for the Bedford congregation: "And I thank God he gave unto me some measure of bowels and pity for their souls" (272). In keeping with an increasing love for the people of God is an increasing love for God Himself. As Bunyan's love grows, he comes to the place where he sacrifices all, though not without pain, to his loyalty for Christ (327). Thus he decides to continue to preach, knowing that he will therefore be imprisoned and unable to provide for his wife and family. These "good works" evidence Bunyan as one of the elect.



Grace Abounding is clearly structured on the stages of conversion which Calvin outlines in The Institutes. Luther's influence on Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, however, is expressed by the words Bunyan chooses to describe the experience of his personal conflict and the delineation of the law and Gospel theology expressed in Grace Abounding.

Bunyan reveals Luther's influence upon him by mentioning the role Luther's commentary on Galatians played in his conversion experience. Bunyan recalls his desire to read of some "ancient godly man's experience" (128). Bunyan attributes the good fortune of finding Luther's work to the providence of God. In the commentary he discovers an experience similar to his own:

when I had but a little way perused,  
I found my condition in his experience,  
so largely and profoundly handled, as  
if his Book had been written out of my  
heart.

(129)

Bunyan's inward struggle, depression, and despair are reminiscent of the emotional battles Luther fought. Both men were intensely aware of their essentially wicked and evil natures, both were aware of their inability to appease an angry God, and both were, for a time, ignorant of what they must do to be saved. Bunyan was: "greatly affected and troubled with the thoughts of the day of judgement" (6), a fear that drove Luther to the monastery. Furthermore, Bunyan's travail under his burden of sin evoked "many groans to God" (76) and pious acts, again



reminiscent of Luther's vigils, fastings and prayers.

Bunyan found, in Luther's commentary, the conflict in a sinner between the devil and the Word of God, expressed in language mirroring his own personal battle. Luther's style in his commentary is simple, direct and straightforward. Bunyan writes Grace Abounding in a similar way, deliberately choosing "plain" words and excluding a higher style:

I could also have stepped into a stile much higher then this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do: but I dare not: God did not play in convincing of me: the Devil did not play in tempting of me; neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me; wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was.

(p. 3)

The direct language which both men employ in their works creates a very vivid effect, and makes their experiences both immediate and captivating to the reader. Furthermore, the style reflects their shared conviction of the devil as an objective reality, and the Word of God as a "sword."

In Grace Abounding and Luther's commentary on Galatians there are numerous references to the role and person of the devil. The devil is a spiritual adversary for Luther and Bunyan; a foe who seeks to destroy and must be overcome. Both men conceive of the devil as an





enemy with whom one can converse. Bunyan writes:

O Lord, thought I, what if I should not indeed [be chosen] ? It may be you are not, said the Tempter; it may be so, indeed thought I. Why then, said Satan, you had as good leave off, and strive no further.

(60)

Luther, a firm believer in the devil as a tempter, writes:

When that great dragon, I say, that old serpent the devil (who deceiveth the whole world, and accuseth our brethren in the presence of God day and night) cometh and layeth unto thy charge, that thou hast not only done no good, but hast also transgressed the law of God, say unto him, Thou troublest me with the remembrance of my sins past. Thou puttest me also in mind that I have done no good. But this is nothing to me.

(p. 460)

According to Luther and Bunyan the devil is also seen and felt. Bunyan writes:

In prayer also, I have been greatly troubled at this time: sometimes I have thought I should see the Devil, nay, thought I have felt him behind me, pull my clothes: he would be also continually at me.

(107)

The vividness and reality attributed to the devil is also ascribed to temptations and trials. Bunyan literally enters into physical battle with temptation while being urged to "sell Christ":



This temptation did put me to such scares lest I should at sometimes, I say, consent thereto, and be overcome therewith, that by the very force of my mind in labouring to gainsay and resist this wickedness my very Body also would be put into action or motion, by way of pushing or thrusting with my hands or elbows.

(137)

Bunyan recounts how temptations "handled him" (96).

For Luther, as well, trials are personalized and able to assail, lead captive, and drive one into "much heaviness" (p. 472). Luther writes:

The comfort is this, that in serious conflicts and terrors, wherein the feeling of sin, heaviness of spirit, desperation, and such-like, is very strong, for they enter deeply into the heart and mightily assail it, thou must not follow thine own feelings: for if thou do, thou wilt say, I feel the horrible terrors of the law and the tyranny of sin, not only rebelling against me, but also subduing and leading me captive.

(p. 473)

Luther's and Bunyan's experiences with the devil and trial are conquered by the power of the Word of God. Bunyan uses many tactile images to describe his combat with the enemy. Similarly, physical attributes are given the Scriptures, by Bunyan and Luther, to reveal the intensity of spiritual warfare. In keeping with Luther's knowledge of passive righteousness, righteousness man cannot merit, but which must be imputed by the will of God, both Luther and Bunyan understand themselves to be



acted upon by the Word of God. This concept pervades Grace Abounding. Voices "dart from heaven into [his] soul" (22), the Bible is "as if it talked to [him]" (63), words "brake in upon [his] mind" (68), choruses of thoughts assail him (91), the Word "claps" him upon the back while praying (201) and the Bible possesses, as it were, a "visage" which changes as Bunyan grows in the knowledge of grace (223). At one point, Bunyan describes the Scriptures pursuing him:

Now about a week or fortnight after this, I was much followed by this scripture. . . And sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it were call so strongly after me, that once above all the rest, I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some man had behind me, called to me.

(93)

Luther, in his commentary, considers the Word as a "thunderbolt" which "overthrows" (p. 72), which "dashes the teeth" out of the law, "wrests" out his "sting" and "spoils him of his force" (p. 164).

In addition to the impact of common experience, similarity of diction, and perception of evil and good, Bunyan is also significantly influenced by Luther's understanding of grace. Greaves writes:

Arising directly out of their experiences of conversion the influence of Luther on Bunyan's concept of the nature of God can be seen especially in Bunyan's view of God fundamentally in terms of the





wrath-grace dichotomy rather than  
in terms of the Calvinist emphasis  
on the sovereign will of God.<sup>5</sup>

Salvation is of primary importance to Luther and Bunyan. They essentially understand God in terms of being a Savior, therefore they constantly emphasize grace. Calvin, on the other hand, perceives God as sovereign, and is more concerned with salvation in terms of justice.

Bunyan, by means of a very severe trial, is brought by God to a knowledge of the valuelessness of works and the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ (72):

at this I was greatly lightened  
in my mind, and made to understand  
that God could justifie a sinner at  
any time; it was but looking  
upon Christ, and imputing of his  
benefits to us, and the work was  
forthwith done.

(258)

Bunyan's words echo a thought which pervades Luther's commentary:

For it is an horrible blasphemy to  
imagine that there is any work where-  
by thou shouldst presume to pacify  
God, since thou seest that there is  
nothing which is able to pacify him  
but this inestimable price, even the  
death and blood of the Son of God, one  
drop whereof is more precious than the  
whole world.

(p. 178)

Luther, aware that works will not save the sinner, still recognizes the function of the law. He realizes that God will employ the law to reveal sin, for the purpose of



bringing one to Christ:

It is not the will of God, that  
after the law hath done his office  
in thee, thou shouldest only be  
terrified and killed, but that,  
when thou art brought by the law  
to the knowledge of thy misery and  
damnation, thou shouldest not de-  
spair, but believe in Christ, "who  
is the end of the law to righteous-  
ness, to every one that believeth."  
(Rom x. 4)

(p. 357)

Luther's words give a remarkably close portrayal of Bunyan's own experience. His awareness of sin terrified him, led him into misery and a certainty of damnation. Through this experience he was taught to believe in Christ. Bunyan's experience of grace freed him from the terror of death: "Now was I got on high; I saw myself within the arms of Grace and Mercy; and though I was before afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried, Let me die" (259).

The movement from terror to confidence allowed both Luther and Bunyan, in retrospect, to re-interpret their experience of trial. For Luther, Anfechtungen, or temptations, are the greatest teachers of basic Christian principles. Indeed, he attributes King David's great insights to the experience of "great assaults." According to Luther, the role of temptation is crucial to understand Scripture, faith, and the love of God. Bunyan, in Grace Abounding, perceives trials in the



same way:

I never saw those heights and depths  
in grace, and love, and mercy, as I  
saw after this temptation: great sins  
do draw out great grace; and where guilt  
is most terrible and fierce, there the  
mercy of God in Christ, when shewed to  
the Soul, appears most high and mighty.

(252)

The influence of Luther and Calvin on Bunyan, as revealed in Grace Abounding, is profound. Furthermore, their specific individual influence is illustrative of their personal style as theologians: Calvin expresses himself very systematically, remaining aloof from his doctrinal statements, whereas Luther always integrates personal experience and doctrine. Bunyan was greatly affected by Calvin's understanding of predestination, which thus dictates the structure of Grace Abounding. Nevertheless, it is Luther's expression of his experience with God, conflict, and the law and Gospel theology delineated in his commentary on Galatians which most appealed to Bunyan's perception of his own experiences. In Luther, Bunyan recognized a man whose life reflected the same obsessions and fears with which he wrestled. It is Luther's personal, involved Savior who is most clearly revealed in Bunyan's work, not Calvin's sovereign, and often remote, Judge. How this influence is disclosed in The Pilgrim's Progress is the subject of the following chapters.





#### IV. Calvin and The Pilgrim's Progress: Structure

Contrasting with the literal account of conversion Bunyan presents in Grace Abounding is the fictional story of a spiritual journey he develops in The Pilgrim's Progress. This work discloses a considerably more detailed and richer account of the Christian pilgrimage than Grace Abounding, as Bunyan incorporates within it a wider range of spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, the impact of Grace Abounding upon Bunyan's later work is evident, and therefore the influence of both Luther and Calvin is evident as well.

Bunyan organizes The Pilgrim's Progress within the same Calvinist pattern he uses in Grace Abounding. Predestination, beginning with election, and proceeding to vocation, justification, sanctification and glorification, is the structure by which Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City is defined. In contrast with Grace Abounding, where Bunyan emphasizes election, vocation and justification, The Pilgrim's Progress is concerned primarily with sanctification. The extensive development of this stage of predestination fulfills Bunyan's intention in The Pilgrim's Progress, to provide



the reader with an accurate portrayal of Christian life:

This Book it chaulketh out before thine eyes,  
The man that seeks the everlasting Prize:  
It shews you whence he comes, whither he goes,  
What he leaves undone; also what he does:  
It also shews you how he runs, and runs,  
Till he unto the Gate of Glory comes.<sup>1</sup>

Also, within the work, brief portrayals of predestination are incorporated by Bunyan into several important conversations.

Predestination, given election, begins with the revelation of one's personal sin. The sinner must possess a true and sincere knowledge of his own wretched state and utter unworthiness in the sight of God. At the outset of the work, Bunyan is careful to point out that Christian knows something is terribly wrong. Christian understands the burden on his back to be something he must be rid of, and is terrified its presence will secure his damnation:

Then said Evangelist, 'Why not willing to die? since this life is attended with so many evils?' The Man answered, Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back, will sink me lower than the Grave; and I shall fall into Tophet. And Sir, if I be not fit to go to Prison, I am not fit (I am sure) to go to Judgement, and from thence to Execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

(p. 10)

Christian's awareness of his sin and willingness to do something about it, by fleeing from the City of Destruction, are evidences of election. Conversely, those who refuse



to acknowledge their sinful condition, such as Mr. Ignorance: "I will never believe that my heart is thus bad" (p. 146), or refuse to begin or complete a pilgrimage, are of the reprobate.

According to Calvin, knowledge of sin is followed by the desire to seek further information with respect to one's eternal state. Belief in one's election is largely due to assurance derived from hearing and obeying the Word. As Christian converses with Evangelist his knowledge increases; he does not know where to go and therefore Evangelist provides him with a "role" containing the instruction "Fly from the wrath to come" (p. 10). Furthermore, Evangelist points out to him the way which he should travel; towards a shining light that leads to the Wicket-Gate. Christian obeys Evangelist's words, a clear indication of the efficacy of the Scriptures, and flees from the City of Destruction. Christian's sincere response to Evangelist and fervency in seeking Christ provides further indication of his election.

Reminiscent of Bunyan's attempt to be justified by works as recorded in Grace Abounding (30-36), Christian is tempted to depend upon the law rather than grace. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman persuades Christian to depart from the "way" and journey towards the town of Morality. Just outside the town Christian comes across Mount Sinai. The flashes of fire and the fear the Mount would fall on his head causes Christian to despair for his life (p. 20).





Fortunately Evangelist finds him, gives him a severe warning, and provides him with information necessary to find his way back to the proper path. At this point in his soteriological journey Christian learns the law cannot deliver him of his burden, a knowledge necessary for salvation. Evangelist informs Christian:

thou must hate his setting of thy feet  
in the way that leadeth to the  
ministration of death. And for this thou  
must consider to whom he sent thee, and  
also how unable that person was to de-  
liver thee from thy burden. . . No man  
was as yet ever rid of his burden by  
him, no, nor ever is like to be: ye  
cannot be justified by the Works of  
the Law; for by the deeds of the Law  
no man living can be rid of his  
burden: therefore Mr. Worldly-Wiseman  
is an alien, and Mr. Legality a cheat.

(p. 23)

Thus instructed, Christian follow the proper path, which leads him to the Wicket-Gate.

Arriving at the Gate, Christian converses with Good-Will. Christian's positive response to the call of God is obvious:

Christian: Here is a poor burdened sinner,  
I come from the City of De-  
struction, but am going to Mount  
Zion, that I may be delivered from  
the wrath to come; I would there-  
fore, Sir, since I am informed that  
by this Gate is the way thither,  
know if you are willing to let me in.

Good-Will: I am willing with all my heart,  
said he; and with that he opened  
the Gate.

(p. 25)



Evidence of the importance to Bunyan of the call of God is further disclosed in Part Two of The Pilgrim's Progress. After Christiana acknowledges her sin, (which she understands primarily in terms of the persecution of her husband), she receives a visit from Secret, a messenger of the King. Secret tells her:

Christiana, the merciful one has sent me to tell thee that he is a God ready to forgive, and that he taketh delight to multiply pardon to offences. He also would have thee know that he inviteth thee to come into his presence, to his Table, and that he will feed thee with the Fat of his House, and with the heritage of Jacob thy father.

(p. 179)

Furthermore, Christiana receives a letter from the King, also delivered by Secret, which confirms her call. She is to present this letter at the Wicket-Gate, in order to gain admittance to the "way."

Having passed through the Gate, Christian arrives at the Interpreter's House. His experience there reveals another necessary sign of election: a growing understanding of the Word of God. While the Interpreter shows Christian through the house, his knowledge of various important Christian principles increases. Thus Christian becomes more prepared to continue in his journey. One of the concepts the Interpreter teaches Christian is eternal security, an idea crucial to predestination:

The Interpreter answered, This is Christ, who continually with the Oyl



of his Grace maintains the work already begun in the heart; by the means of which, notwithstanding what the Devil can do, the souls of his people prove gracious still.

(p. 32)

Once Christian exhibits to the Interpreter an adequate understanding of the lessons, the Interpreter sends him on his way. He exhorts Christian to "meditate" on the new concepts he has learned: "Well, keep all things so in thy mind, that they may be as a Goad in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go" (p. 37).

Although Christian is allowed in at the gate, warmly greeted by both Good-Will and the Interpreter, and increases in his knowledge of the Scriptures, he is still not justified. Good-Will clarifies this point for Christian when he tells him:

As to the burden, be content to bear it, until thou comest to the place of Deliverance; for there it will fall from thy back itself.

(p. 28)

Justification, the next stage of predestination, is only possible by means of the Cross.<sup>2</sup> After Christian leaves the Interpreter, he runs along a stretch of highway bordered by the wall of Salvation. Bunyan draws attention to the fact that Christian still possesses his burden, and therefore as yet he is still not justified. Christian journeys along the highway until he comes upon the Cross.





It is at this point the burden falls from Christian's shoulders, tumbles down the hill, and rolls into the sepulchre, never to be seen again. The vision of the Cross causes Christian to weep, and the loss of the burden fills him with joy. Christian understands his freedom to come to him only by the work of Christ: "He hath given me rest, by his sorrow; and life, by his death" (p. 38).

Calvin constantly stresses the sovereignty of God. Therefore, for him, an important part of justification is ascribing the honor and glory to God, recognizing man can do nothing to satisfy the requirements of the Judge. Man's election and justification is completely dependent upon the sovereign will of God. Bunyan's description of Christian's moment of justification is brief, yet he includes a short testimony revealing Christian's recognition of the grace of Christ. In Part Two, however, Bunyan provides greater detail of justification in describing Christiana's experience at the Cross. He includes a discourse by Great-heart on basic Calvinist theology. In this sermon Great-heart stresses that Christiana is the recipient of "special grace," and therefore she is greatly moved by the experience of the Cross (p. 212). Christiana, overwhelmed by the mercy of God, exclaims:

True, methinks it makes my Heart bleed  
to think that he should bleed for me.  
Oh! thou loving one, Oh! thou Blessed  
one. Thou deservest to have me, thou  
hast bought me: Thou deservest to have  
me all, thou hast paid for me ten  
thousand times more than I am worth.

(p. 212)



Christian's warm reception of Christ's mercy is immediately contrasted with the response of Simple, Sloth, and Presumption to grace. They despise the righteousness of Christ, are not motivated by the Cross to complete their pilgrimage, and actively seek to lead others out of the way. The example of these three reprobates illumines Great-heart's discourse on those not transformed by knowledge of the Cross:

You speak now in the warmth of your Affections. . . this is not communicated to every one, nor to every one that did see your Jesus bleed. There was that stood by, and that saw the Blood run from his Heart to the Ground, and yet was so far off this, that instead of lamenting, they laughed at him, and instead of becoming his Disciples, did harden their Hearts against him. So that all that you have, my Daughters, you have by a peculiar impression made by a Divine contemplating upon what I have spoken to you. . . This you have therefore by a special Grace.

(p. 213)

The experience of the Cross is not efficacious for Simple, Sloth, and Presumption. They do not positively respond to Christ's mercy, and consequently reveal themselves to be not of the elect. Because they reject grace, for them neither Christiana nor Mercy feels compassion; rather they are confident that their punishment is just: "they have but what they deserve" (p. 214).

According to Calvin, justification occurs only once; the elect never loses his new legal status before God.



Bunyan devotes considerable space in Grace Abounding to discussing election, vocation, and justification, and relatively little space to sanctification and glorification. In The Pilgrim's Progress this ratio is reversed. Sanctification comprises much of the plot, as Bunyan is concerned with impressing upon his readers the Christian life is best conceived of as a journey, a process or movement from one place to another. This process, in predestination, is sanctification, the means by which the believer is gradually conformed to the image of Christ.

Life as a journey is the controlling idea in The Pilgrim's Progress. Christian is travelling from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, and, in order to reach this destination, he must stay on the narrow pathway which alone leads to paradise. Therefore, any time Christian leaves this path, he sins and thereby inhibits the process of sanctification. Bunyan provides three examples of Christian's leaving the "way": when enticed by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, when he takes the bypath that leads to Doubting Castle, and when seduced by the Flatterer's words. In each of these instances Christian is severely chastized for leaving the "way." By deserting the path Christian loses sight of the goal, to the detriment of his sanctification. Nevertheless, because Christian is of the elect, his deviations from the "way" are not final. Indeed, the "castings down and the risings up" of the





believer are a part of life until he reaches the Celestial City. Richard Greaves writes:

In themselves, however, believers were not perfectly holy even though they were sanctified. The possibility and the actuality of sin remained throughout their lives, although it was also true that sanctification changed the whole man - understanding, will, mind, affections, judgement and conscience.<sup>3</sup>

Although the elect does fall, he does not fall eternally; there exists no final impediment to his journey. His ultimate salvation is secure.

An element of sanctification is perseverance. The Interpreter teaches this lesson to Christian in the story of Christ putting oil on the believer's heart. This illustration reveals that God, in spite of the machinations of the devil, actively preserves the elect, thereby enabling him to complete his journey. In this example Bunyan again asserts the primacy of the will of God in both salvation and sanctification.

In consonance with this work of God is the believer's own activity. He is not passive, but is to progress, and the journey is to be full of good works. In contrast to the Arminians, who feel Calvinism supports inactivity, Bunyan upholds the need for works. Bunyan discloses this emphasis in the conversation between Ignorance and Christian:



Ignorance: What! Would you have us trust to what Christ in his own person has done without us? This conceit would loosen the reins of our lust, and tolerate us to live as we list: For what matter how we live if we may be Justified by Christs personal righteousness from all, when we believe it?

Christian: Ignorance is thy name, and as thy name is, so art thou; even this thy answer demonstrateth what I say. Ignorant thou art of what Justifying righteousness is, and as Ignorant how to secure thy Soul through faith of it from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou also art Ignorant of the true effects of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ, which is, to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love his Name, his Word, Ways and People, and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.

(p. 148)

Christian rebukes Ignorance for his stupidity and stresses the need for observable expression of sanctification in the elect's life. The believer is to provide the world with a means of knowing his election with certainty. One of the means by which election is disclosed is good works: loving Christ and His people. In keeping with this expression is the willingness to endure suffering and hardship, an activity which Calvin refers to as "cross-bearing."

In his tract, The Heavenly Footman, Bunyan fully develops the concept of life as a pilgrimage. The pilgrim must be willing to press forward, in spite of the difficulties lying in his way to hinder progress. The



journey is long and the way tiring. Furthermore, not everyone beginning completes the course. Consequently, the ultimate evidence of election is acceptance into the Celestial City. Calvin defines glorification as final acceptance. Glorification is the last stage in predestination and the final event in Christian's soteriological journey.

Glorification is the realization of the hope which inspires the Christian to persevere. It is the reward the pilgrim receives at the completion of his journey. Thus Christian, after he passes through the River and arrives at the gates, is greeted by several celestial beings, and escorted into the Celestial City. Here he is perfected, and thereby freed from the power of sin and death.

Christiana is moved to begin her journey when she learns of her husband's acceptance into the Celestial City. The knowledge of her husband's successful journey, and that he received the promised reward, intensifies Christian's desire to become a pilgrim. Her dream of him "standing in bliss," with a harp, surrounded by "immortals," works in conjunction with her remorse, and the letter she receives from Secret. For these reasons she and her children leave the City of Destruction for the Celestial City. Thus Bunyan reveals two purposes of glorification: it inspires pilgrims with hope while on the pilgrimage and it provides incentive for others to begin the journey. More important than these considerations, however, is the





fact that glorification represents fulfillment of the promise of God and release from the problems and pains which accompany this life.

In keeping with the over-all, general structure of Parts One and Two of The Pilgrim's progress, a structure which plainly reflects Calvin's understanding of predestination, is the structure found within several individual conversations throughout the narrative. In these discussions Bunyan reveals the influence of Calvin's theology on his own understanding of salvation. Two conversations reveal this impact: the conversation between Christian, Faithful, and Talkative, and the conversation between Christian and Hopeful.

While Christian, Faithful, and Talkative journey together, Faithful becomes "sick" of Talkative's conversation because it is shallow and insincere. Christian advises Faithful to direct the discussion towards the specific issue of salvation, an action Christian believes will cause Talkative to end the discussion. Faithful agrees, and, upon returning to Talkative, begins with a question crucial to predestination: "How doth the saving Grace of God discover it self, when it is in the heart of man?" (p. 81). When Talkative provides an incorrect answer, Faithful informs him: "Nay. . . I think you should rather say, It shows it self by inclining the Soul to abhor its sin" (p. 81). Faithful's reply is the necessary first



step in predestination. The conversation progresses, and during a lengthy speech by Faithful, he emphasizes: 1) the need for a conviction of sin, 2) a revelation of the Savior of the World, 3) a desire to seek Him (expressed as hungerings and thirstings), 4) a willingness to submit to and accept grace, and 5) clear and observable proofs of salvation by means of good works (p. 83). Faithful's insistence upon the fulfillment of each stage in Calvin's system irritates Talkative and therefore he parts company with Christian and Faithful.

The second conversation which discloses Calvin's influence on Bunyan occurs between Christian and Hopeful as they journey through the Enchanted Ground. Hopeful's account of his conversion experience is reminiscent of Bunyan's personal account in Grace Abounding. He suffers from similar temptations, such as sabbath-breaking, and, after recognizing his sin, experiences a desire to continue in it: "Sin was yet very sweet to my flesh, and I was loath to leave it" (p. 138). His temptations are "heart-affrighting" hours and his torment great. As the conversation progresses Hopeful reveals, one by one, the realization and fulfillment of each of the stages of predestination. His awareness of sin leads to a growing knowledge of Christ, he responds to the call to "come," experiences the grace provided for him through the Cross, and embarks on a pilgrimage. Furthermore, he is filled



with a desire to live a holy life: "It made me love a holy life, and long to do something for the Honour and Glory of the Name of the Lord Jesus" (p. 144).

What Bunyan has to say with respect to the theological aspects of the Christian pilgrimage puts him within the strict Calvinist tradition of soteriology. However, developed within the context of the Calvinist structure of The Pilgrim's Progress are Bunyan's images, settings, and characters. The images and settings reflect Bunyan's indebtedness to Luther. Although the characters, faithful to the concept of predestination, are either good or evil, elect or damned, their struggles and temptations disclose their natures as more in keeping with the theology and experience of Luther. This impact of Luther upon Bunyan is the subject of the next chapter.





V. Luther and The Pilgrim's Progress:  
Image, Setting, and Character

Bunyan's images and settings are inseparable from his ideas. He employs them to disclose his theology and to reveal his experience: often the settings are the externalization of an inner state. Moreover, various settings in The Pilgrim's Progress are physical portrayals of Biblical texts. The Word itself also assumes a personal, physical reality in Bunyan's allegory, as revealed in Christian's battle with Apollyon. Luther's impact upon this aspect of Bunyan's art is revealed by usage of his law and Gospel theology and his understanding of the Word of God as a powerful tool in the Christian's life.

The concept of grace is crucial to Luther's theology. In his commentary on Galatians, Luther constantly stresses the difference between the law and the Gospel, and the distinction which Luther draws between them is everywhere evident in The Pilgrim's Progress; Bunyan's work reflects both the theological and personal impact of Luther.



Bunyan, like Luther, was terrified by the power of the law to condemn. His attempt to find comfort in legalism only increased his anxiety, a fact revealed in the bell-ringing account in Grace Abounding (33). This fear is again expressed in The Pilgrim's Progress. Christian leaves the "narrow way," following the advice of Worldly-Wiseman, to have his burden removed by Mr. Legality in the town of Morality. As he journeys he comes upon Mount Sinai:

So Christian turned out of his way to go to Mr. Legality's house for help: but behold, when he was got now hard by the Hill, it seemed so high, and also that side of it that was next the way side, did hang so much over, that Christian was afraid to venture further, lest the Hill should fall on his head: wherefore he stood still, and wotted not what to do. Also his burden, now, seemed heavier to him, than while he was in his way. There came also flashes of fire out of the Hill, that made Christian afraid that he should be burned: here therefore he swet, and did quake for fear.

(p. 20)

Bunyan's description of Mount Sinai as a threat to Christian's life, and Christian's reaction to the mountain, mirror the experience of Luther as recounted in his commentary. Throughout the work Luther describes the law as "Terrifying," a "Tyrannt and judge" and Mount Sinai as a "smoking and burning mount" (p. 308). Bunyan's use of Luther's images as he describes the Mountain reflects the influence of the



Reformation theologian.<sup>1</sup>

For Luther the law is an oppressor, an active force which constantly reminds man of his sin and his inability to alter his condition. This constant reminder of personal sin obsessed both Luther and Bunyan. For Bunyan, this awareness of sin and blindness of mercy is disclosed in such settings as the Slough of Despond and Doubting Castle, places which reflect the impact of the law upon the person who neglects to remember the promises of God.

The only means of overcoming the bondage of the law is the message of the Gospel, which is essentially a message of grace. Luther, in his commentary, offers a personal testimony to define the difference between the effects of the law and the Gospel:

I have been so nustled and so drowned even from my youth, that at the very hearing of the name of Christ my heart trembled and quaked for fear; for I was persuaded that he was a severe judge. Wherefore it is to me a double travail and trouble to correct and reform this evil; first, to forget, to condemn, and to resist this old grounded error, that Christ is a lawgiver and judge; for it always returneth and plucketh me back: then to plant in my heart a new and true persuasion of Christ that he is a justifier and a Saviour. . . Wherefore if any man feel himself oppressed with heaviness and anguish of heart, he must not impute it unto Christ. . . Let us learn therefore to put a difference between Christ and a lawgiver, not only in word, but also in deed and in practice.

(p. 181)





Here the law causes him to tremble and quake, and the grace of Christ relieves oppression and anguish. Christ never evokes fear in the believer: "For Christ, when he cometh, is nothing else but joy and sweetness to a trembling and broken heart" (p. 181).

Luther's firm belief in Christ as one offering grace to the oppressed sinner pervades his work. Bunyan is strongly influenced by Luther's thought, and therefore images of grace constantly occur in his allegory. Christian, as he journeys to the Celestial City, stops and refreshes himself at several arbours and meadows provided by the King for the encouragement of his pilgrims. These settings are all described as beautiful resting places, full of good things necessary to restore the strength of the weary traveller. Furthermore, lilies, traditional symbols of grace, are present in abundance. One example of such a resting place is the meadow in which Christian and Hopeful stop just prior to their capture by Giant Despair:

Now their way lay just upon the bank of the River: here therefore Christian and his Companion walked with great delight; they drank also of the water of the River, which was pleasant and enlivening to their weary Spirits; besides, on the banks of this River, on either side, were green Trees, that bore all manner of Fruit; and the leaves of the trees were good for Medicine. . . . On either side of the River was also a Meadow, curiously beautified with Lilies; and it was green all the year long.

(pp. 110-111)



In describing scenes which reflect the grace and mercy of Christ, Bunyan selects features from the physical world which best portray for him beauty, serenity, and grace. The impact of such books as the Song of Songs, Isaiah, and Revelation is evident in his description of quiet resting places.

Some of the settings which Bunyan incorporates into his pilgrim's journey are direct, physical manifestations of specific Biblical texts. Bunyan's Valley of the Shadow of Death is the externalization of David's Valley in Psalm 23. The Hill Difficulty represents the struggle inherent in the Christian life as described in Isaiah 40: 29-31; the harbour in the Hill is a physical expression of the promise for renewed strength found within these same verses. The Slough of Despond and miry clay images express the thought of the Psalmist in Psalm 40:2: "He drew me up from the desolate pit / out of the miry bog."

Similarly, Bunyan makes use of the Bible as a weapon which Christian, and other characters, use to defend themselves. Bunyan imparts physical power to the Word and thereby the Bible acts upon his characters. In both these respects Bunyan is reminiscent of Luther, who conceived of the Word of God as the means to quench Satan's fiery darts (p. 279) and a physical object which produces change in the believer's life.

Perhaps the most dramatic instance of Bunyan's use of



the Scripture as a weapon to defeat the enemy occurs during Christian's battle with Apollyon. Apollyon blocks Christian's pathway and demands he return his allegiance to the devil. Christian refuses and the battle ensues (p. 59). Apollyon attacks Christian with "flaming darts," the traditional symbol of the weapon of Satan. Christian uses his sword to defeat Apollyon.<sup>2</sup> Christian's sword is "two-edged," and is therefore the physical embodiment of a common Christian metaphor for the Word of God. Bunyan intensifies the reality of the battle in Part Two of The Pilgrim's Progress. When Great-heart and his companions come upon the place where Christian and Apollyon fought, they discover some of the signs of the battle. Shivers of Apollyon's darts remain and rocks are split by Christian's "by-blows" (p. 240). Bunyan obviously wishes to stress the physical reality of both the battle and their weapons.

Bunyan makes further use of the idea of the Word of God as a physical sword in his account of Mr. Valiant-for-Truth's battle with the three robbers. His weapon is a "Jerusalem blade" which is able to divide flesh, bones, soul and spirit (p. 290). The capabilities of this weapon are reminiscent of those metaphors used to describe the Word of God in Hebrews 4:11: "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow."

Similar to the kind of impact Luther had on Bunyan's





development of images and setting, is Luther's influence on his characters. Although, in keeping with Calvinism, they are either good or evil, elect or damned, the characters reflect Luther's intensely passionate nature. Christian, the hero of the story, shares the temperament, weaknesses and strengths Bunyan both experienced and saw reflected in Luther's commentary on Galatians. Furthermore, Bunyan's devil, as revealed in The Pilgrim's Progress, is no doubt informed by Luther's own perception of the Tempter.

From the beginning of the story there is a sense of urgency. Graceless, a man overwhelmed by his consciousness of sin is in fear of divine judgement. He is certain the wrath of God is soon going to destroy both him and his dwelling place, the City of Destruction. Graceless desperately searches for safety:

I saw a Man cloathed with Raggs, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own House, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his Back. I looked, and saw him open the Book, and Read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, what shall I do?

(p. 8)

This picture of Graceless, (soon to become Christian), with his burden and book, seeking salvation, is integral to The Pilgrim's Progress. Christian embodies the fears and despair which Bunyan experienced and records in Grace Abounding. Constant soul-searching overwhelms Christian with a sense of his own wickedness. The intensity of this



reality, revealed as he runs from home and family crying "Life, Life, Eternal life" (p. 10), is reminiscent of the over-powering sense of despair which possessed both Bunyan and Luther.

Christian's obsession with the state of his soul is disclosed in several places. He falls into the Slough of Despond, revealing his propensity for despair and doubt. This fall foreshadows Christian's most serious temptations, which like Bunyan's and Luther's, are temptations to spiritual despair. The Slough of Despond, reminiscent of the "miry bog" in Grace Abounding, is a place where: "the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run" (p. 15). Although Christian's conviction of sin is good, his fears, doubts, and apprehensions are not. The only way to avoid this "scum and filth," is to remember and act upon the promises of God. These promises are the steps which the King provides for His pilgrims to help them avoid the mire:

True, there are by the direction of the Lawgiver, certain good and substantial steps, placed even through the very midst of this Slow; but at such time as this place doth much spue out its filth, as it doth against change of weather, these steps are hardly seen; or if they be, Men through the dizziness of their Heads, step besides; and then they are bemired to purpose, notwithstanding the steps be there.

(p. 16)

With the aid of Help, Christian gets out of the Slough and



continues to the Wicket-gate. Once through the gate Christian undergoes three significant moments of tremendous temptation to despair: in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, in Doubting Castle, and while crossing the River to the Celestial City.

Christian's trek through the Valley of the Shadow of Death is one of the outstanding scenes in The Pilgrim's Progress. It represents a major crisis in Christian's soteriological journey and is reminiscent of Bunyan's own great temptation to despair after "selling" Christ. In this place "Christian was worse put to it than in his fight with Apollyon" (p. 61). Bunyan borrows from his own experience to develop and describe the details of this valley. It is a "solitary" place, a fact which emphasizes the isolation Bunyan felt while being "sorely" tempted. The image of the "miry bog" recurs in the Valley as a quag into which King David fell (p. 62). More to the point, however, are the voices and visions which Christian experiences while journeying through the Valley:

Thus he went on a great while, yet still the flames would be reaching towards him: also he heard doleful voices, and rushings too and fro, so that sometimes he thought he should be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the Streets. This frightful sight was seen, and these dreadful noises were heard by him for several miles together.

(p. 63)

This scene is reminiscent of Bunyan's earlier account in Grace Abounding: the devil pulls his clothes, interrupts





his prayer, and constantly pursues him.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Christian's experience also echoes Luther's battles with Satan.<sup>4</sup>

Christian is not only plagued with voices and visions while in the Valley, but subjected to confusion and a loss of objectivity. Thus Bunyan writes:

One thing I would not let slip, I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded, that he did not know his own voice: and thus I perceived it: Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning Pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stept up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind.

(p. 63).

As the intensity of the trial increases, Christian's determination to be victorious also increases. He reflects upon his recent battle with Apollyon and thereby takes courage; he makes use of his weapon "All-Prayer," and finds strength in hearing Faithful recite Scripture as he journeys through the Valley ahead of him. Christian's endurance of this trial discloses his ability to persevere and to trust in God during a very difficult time. Ability to endure in times of trial is an important element of Luther's theology (p. xxii).

The second incident in Christian's pilgrimage which reveals his inclination to despair occurs in Doubting Castle. Prior to reaching the castle, Christian, and his companion Hopeful, become discouraged by the difficulty of the path: "Now the way from the River was rough, and their



feet tender by reason of their Travels; So the soul of the Pilgrims was much discouraged, because of the way" (p. 111). Because their minds are clouded by frustration they are particularly vulnerable to failure. Christian's propensity for despair overcomes him. Shortly after convincing Hopeful to join him in search of an easier route, they are captured by Giant Despair, and taken to Doubting Castle. The conditions in the castle are terrible, and their despair increases. Christian, however, is doubly sorry: "Now in this place, Christian had double sorrow, because 'twas through his unadvised haste that they were brought into this distress" (p. 114).

After passively enduring several days' captivity in the giant's home, Christian finds himself relying on his younger companion for guidance and advice. If left to his own ability to reason, Christian would choose suicide over life in these circumstances:

Brother, said Christian, what shall we do? the life that we now live is miserable: for my part, I know not whether is best, to live thus, or to die out of hand. My soul chuseth strangling rather than life; and the Grave is more easie for me than this Dungeon: Shall we be ruled by the Giant?

(p. 115)

Fortunately Hopeful is true to his name; he therefore, upon the basis of Scripture, advises hope that God may yet deliver them. The giant's threats increase, Hopeful continues to provide encouragement, and he and Christian



begin to pray. Eventually Christian remembers that he possesses the key to deliverance: the promises of God. Bunyan stresses again the importance of relying upon the Word in times of trial, a lesson also taught by the steps through the Slough of Despond. Likewise, Luther, in his commentary, stresses the need of looking to Christ and the promise of His grace as the only means for overcoming anxiety caused by sin, and promoted by the devil:

Thy conscience, O man, is subject to the law, sin, and death; from which thou canst not be delivered either by men or angels. But now cometh the Gospel, and preacheth unto thee remission of sins by Jesus Christ, who hath abolished the law, and hath destroyed sin and death: believe in him; so shalt thou be delivered from the curse of the law, and from the tyranny of sin and death: thou shalt become righteous, and have eternal life.

(p. 155)

So trusting, Christian takes the key, and unlocks the door; he and Hopeful escape from Giant Despair's dungeon.<sup>5</sup>

The third and final example of Christian's tendency to despair happens when he and Hopeful cross the River to the Celestial City. As they approach the River both the pilgrims are much "stounded" at the sight of it, its depth, and the absence of a bridge. They are assured by the angels that they must pass through the River: nevertheless, Christian still seeks for another way: "The Pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to dispond in his mind, and looked this way and that, but no way could





be found by them, by which they might escape the River" (p. 157). As they "address" themselves to the River, it is Christian again who suffers from the greatest anxiety, and Hopeful who encourages:

They then addressed themselves to the Water; and entring, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful; he said, I sink in deep Waters, the Billows go over my head, all his Waves go over me, Selah. Then said the other, Be of good cheer, my Brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good.

(p. 157)

As he did in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian experiences a loss of perception and objectivity. Therefore he becomes incapable of "orderly speech," feels surrounded by a "great darkness," and loses "his senses" (p. 157). Furthermore, he is troubled with thoughts of past sins, visions of evil spirits, and uncertainty of salvation. Nevertheless Hopeful continues to encourage him with Scripture, and when he reminds him "Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole" (p. 158), Christian breaks out of his stupor and takes courage. Bunyan writes: "Thus they got over" (p. 158).

Bunyan, having Christian overcome with despair in the last moments of life, thereby portrays the Christian pilgrimage as a struggle to the end. Christian's agonizing struggle with the temptation to despair not only echoes the battles of Bunyan and Luther, but also affords Bunyan



the opportunity to incorporate the theme of suffering into The Pilgrim's Progress.

And it is Luther's theology of the Cross which influences Bunyan's doctrine of suffering.<sup>6</sup> The Christian does not flee suffering, but rather, like his Savior, his life reflects the Cross. He unites himself with the suffering of Jesus and thereby the pain he endures in this life takes on a spiritual significance. It unites the pilgrim with Christ's death, and keeps him humble.

Christian's experience of suffering occurs from the outset of the work. Before he can begin his journey, he must first be willing to leave his wife and family behind. Thus he is immediately ostracized and persecuted, by both family and friends. In order to persevere, Christian must be willing to continue enduring pain. Indeed, prior to entering the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian encounters two men fleeing from the Valley because they would rather cling to their lives than "lose" them. They advise Christian to turn back:

Christian: Whither are you going?

Men: They said, Back, back; and  
would have you to do so too,  
if either life or peace is  
prized by you.

(p. 61)

Christian, however, knows to turn back is ultimately to meet with destruction; hence he continues to follow the path to the Celestial City.



Two outstanding examples of suffering in The Pilgrim's Progress occur to pilgrims other than Christian. The first is Faithful's martyrdom in Vanity Fair. Although both Christian and Faithful are severely persecuted, it is Faithful who dies at the hands of the citizens of Vanity Fair (p. 97). Later, in Part Two, Mr. Valiant-for-truth recounts the way his family attempted to dissuade him from beginning the journey: by listing the tremendous pains and sorrows one must encounter while on a pilgrimage. In spite of their warnings he sets off for the Celestial City; their threats seeming as "so many nothings" to him in the light of the promise of heaven (p. 295). The willingness and ability to endure hardship, which might include martyrdom, are important aspects of Christian character.

Luther's insistence upon the unity of experience and doctrine finds significant expression in the lives of several of Bunyan's characters. While Christian and Faithful journey together towards the Celestial City they are joined by Mr. Talkative, a man who possesses all the answers but performs none of the concomitant good works: "I have observed him both at home and abroad; and I know what I say of him is the truth. His house is as empty of Religion, as the white of an Egg is of savour" (p. 78). In this classic example of Bunyanesque plain style and colloquial speech, Bunyan reveals Talkative's error to be





hypocrisy: his speech and action do not agree. Later, Christian expounds upon the problem of disharmony between words and action:

Faithful: Well, I see that Saying, and  
Doing are two things. . .

Christian: They are two things indeed,  
and are as diverse as are the  
Soul and the Body: For as the  
Body without the Soul, is but  
a dead Carkass; so, Saying, if  
it be alone, is but a dead  
Carkass also. The Soul of  
Religion is the practick part  
. . .

(p. 79)

Christian's insistence upon the union of faith and works is further developed in a conversation between Great-heart and Mr. Honest in Part Two:

Great-heart: Oh! Are you that Country-man  
then? I deem I have half a  
guess of you, your Name is old  
Honesty, is it not? So the  
old Gentleman blushed, and said,  
Not Honesty in the Abstract, but  
Honest is my Name, and I wish  
that my Nature shall agree to  
what I am called.

(p. 247)

Mr. Honest's perception of the difference between the abstract and the pragmatic, and desire for his life to be indicative of the latter, discloses the importance of practical, observable "good works" in day-to-day living. Luther writes:

Now after that a man is once justified,  
and possesseth Christ by faith, and



knoweth that he is his righteousness and life, doubtless he will not be idle, but as a good tree he will bring forth good fruits. For the believing man hath the Holy Ghost, and where the Holy Ghost dwelleth, he will not suffer a man to be idle, but stirreth him up to all exercises of piety and godliness, and of true religion, to the love of God, to the patient suffering of afflictions, to prayer, to thanksgiving, to the exercise of charity towards all men.

(p. 158)

For Luther (p. 156), significant expression of the unity between doctrine and experience is found in the charity Christians possess "towards all men." The influence of this aspect of Luther's theology is disclosed in Part Two of The Pilgrim's Progress. Roger Sharrock writes:

If any single phrase illuminates the atmosphere of the Second Part as Christian's "What shall I do to be saved?" does the First, it is perhaps Christiana's "Bowels becometh Pilgrims."<sup>7</sup>

In Part Two of Bunyan's story we leave behind, to a large extent, the heroic accomplishments, grave dangers, and intense temptations of Part One and enter the world of Christiana: "the atmosphere becomes feminine and practical, with scope for the more tender feelings, and the pilgrim theme is ingeniously reconciled with the necessities of rearing a family."<sup>8</sup>

Bunyan, like Luther (p. 138), insists one first must



be saved, and then follows the desire to love others. In a conversation between Christian and Hopeful, in which Hopeful shares his conversion experience with Christian, he tells how his heart was changed by Christ. As Hopeful becomes more confident in his election and justification, he experiences an intense love for Christ and His people: "And now was my heart full of joy, mine eyes full of tears, and mine affections running over with love, to the Name, People, and Ways of Jesus Christ" (p. 143). Christian, recognizing the soundness of Hopeful's confession, replies: "This was a Revelation of Christ to your soul indeed" (p. 143).

The requirement of compassion and charity finds, as mentioned above, clear and more complete expression in Part Two of The Pilgrim's Progress. Indeed, Bunyan's emphasis on the need for "bowels" obscures predestination, and emphasizes Luther's idea of universal grace. In describing Christiana's motives for embarking on the pilgrimage Bunyan stresses her conscience is uneasy because of her persecution of Christian:

her thoughts began to work in her mind; First, for that she had lost her Husband, and for that the loving bond of that Relation was utterly broken betwixt them.

(p. 177)

The necessary first step, according to Calvin, of personal conviction of sin and a perception of one's own total and





complete unworthiness, is bypassed for the rather more down-to-earth human emotions of guilt and sorrow over losing someone loved. Furthermore, Christiana sets out on her pilgrimage primarily to be re-united with her husband. Christiana's motive for becoming a pilgrim is reflected in her friend. Mercy hears Christiana tell her reason for leaving the City of Destruction and "First, her Bowels yearned over Christiana" (p. 183), and second, she felt conviction for her own sin and the state of her soul. Both women feel compassion for another and therefore become pilgrims.

Bunyan's emphasis on charity also obscures the second stage of predestination: the call. Although Christiana does indeed possess a letter from the King requesting her presence in the Celestial City, Mercy does not receive a specific call from God. Instead, she responds to Christiana's account of her call. The problem becomes extreme at the Wicket-gate, for Mercy possesses no token of grace.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Christiana intercedes on her behalf, and Mercy gains admittance. As the Keeper of the Gate helps Mercy in he tells her: "I pray for all them that believe on me, by what means soever they come unto me" (p. 190). Bunyan clearly modifies strict Calvinist doctrine to accommodate those who respond to the grace of God not by means of a specific call of God, but rather through the testimony of another. Again, Bunyan's emphasis on God as



gracious Savior, in keeping with Luther's emphasis, and in conflict with Calvin's sovereign Judge, is evident.

Luther's influence on Bunyan's characters is not limited to the protagonists. His impact can also be seen in such characters as Apollyon, who represents a demon, in several of the minor characters, and the giants.

Apollyon is the flesh and blood embodiment of the evil presences which are a part of Grace Abounding. In the allegory Christian experiences a definite, observable encounter with a demon, enters into physical combat with him, and overcomes him. In this encounter Bunyan intensifies his own experience, as recorded in Grace Abounding, and thereby increases the dramatic sense of the moment and the sense of joy in victory over the demon. Christian's fiend is very much the personal fiend of both Luther and Bunyan. This "personal" element is reflected in the dramatic dialogue which is a part of the Apollyon episode. The realism of the portrayal of evil is further developed as Christian journeys through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. In this experience Christian is pursued by evil spirits which he sees, feel, and hears. Again, this is reminiscent of Luther and Bunyan.

Luther, in his commentary on Galatians, writes of the machinations of the devil:

But he doth not only bewitch men after this gross manner, but also after a more subtle sort and much more dangerous; wherein he is a marvellous cunning workman. And hereof it cometh that Paul



applieth the bewitching of the senses  
to the bewitching of the spirit. For  
by this spiritual witchcraft that old  
serpent bewitcheth not men's senses,  
but their minds, with false and  
wicked opinions; which opinions,  
they that are so bewitched do take  
to be true and godly.

(p. 192)

Luther ascribes, in this passage as well as in others similar to it, all heresies and false opinions to the deceptions of the devil. Bunyan is clearly influenced by this aspect of Luther's theology. It reveals itself in two ways: by those who actively seek to deceive and those who are passive deceivers. The active deceivers are characters like Worldly-Wiseman, who deliberately tries, and nearly succeeds, in removing Christian from the proper path. He openly refutes the advice Christian receives from Evangelist and sends him instead to be freed of his burden by Mr. Legality. Evangelist's rebuke of Christian is severe. He fully understands the implications of Worldly-Wiseman's counsel and therefore rigorously chastises Christian for allowing himself to be deceived.

Another example of an active deceiver is the Flatterer, who "transforms" himself into an angel of light (a trick ascribed to Satan in II Cor. 11:14), in order to entangle pilgrims in his net and thereby bring about an end to their pilgrimage. Christian and Hopeful, as they journey together, fall prey to his deceiving words: "Follow me, said





the man, it is thither that I am going" (p. 133), in spite of the warning they received from the Shepherds, and are trapped in his net. They are eventually freed by a "Shining One," yet again Christian is severely punished, this time with a whip, for allowing himself to be led off the narrow way. The angel, like Evangelist, identifies the words of the deceiver as the thoughts of the devil. Thus Satan does not only attempt to end the pilgrims' journey through battles with demons themselves, but also by means of false doctrines.

Ignorance is an example of a passive deceiver. He is most appealing because he is passive: "be content to follow the Religion of your Countrey, and I will follow the Religion of mine" (p. 124). His advice to Christian is attractive in its universality and seeming generosity. Ignorance is also a passive deceiver; he does not know that he has been deceived. Indeed, his naive answers to Christian's questions evoke sympathy: "I will never believe that my heart is thus bad" (p. 146). Nevertheless, Christian and Hopeful perceive the folly in Ignorance's position, and although they try to teach him the truth, he refuses to learn.<sup>10</sup> Consequently Ignorance, who progresses as far as the gate to the Celestial City, finally is cast into hell. Ignorance's philosophy of life, which appears as acceptable, "true and godly," is yet another deception of the devil.



Finally, the devil finds expression in Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress through the characters of the giants. Each of them claims, like Apollyon, a special relationship with their master, or an ownership of land on the King's Highway. Giant Grim contends for ownership of land close to the House Beautiful. He refuses to let the pilgrims pass over his property. It is not until Great-heart defeats him in battle that the way is made safe for the travellers (p. 219). Later in the journey, as they come out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the pilgrims encounter Giant Maul. He accuses Great-heart of kidnapping civilians, and thereby weakening his master's Kingdom. Giant Maul challenges Great-heart in combat, and loses (p. 245). As the pilgrims progress on their journey two more giants, Slay-Good and Despair, are destroyed. Each of these characters is a physical being whose main purpose is to disrupt the pilgrim as he travels, and prevent him from completing his journey. Insofar as this is their chief goal, they are associated with the devil, and therefore are to be treated seriously. In Bunyan's allegory the giants manifest various evil characteristics, and in their flesh-and-blood form are real, objective threats to the pilgrims. Bunyan, by embodying Satan's characteristics in a physical form, discloses his own perception, and Luther's, of the reality of evil.



It is clear that Bunyan's images, settings, and characters are informed by Luther's theology. The images and settings add to the vividness of The Pilgrim's Progress and are in harmony with Bunyan's account of the Christian life. Likewise, the protagonists' inward struggles mirror both Bunyan's and Luther's personal experiences. The characters are subject to tremendous despair over sin, and continue to fall prey to this obsession throughout their pilgrimage. The reality of suffering, which is integral to Luther's doctrine and experience, is important to the characters in The Pilgrim's Progress: those who attain the Celestial City willingly endure hardship and persecution; those who are cast into Hell have preferred and sought out a painless life. For Bunyan, as for Luther, theology and life must be united; Christian doctrine must have practical expression in daily life. Therefore Christians are to be compassionate people. Hopeful outlines this doctrine as he speaks with Christian, and Christiana and Mercy are examples of the pragmatic working out of Bunyan's thought. Finally, the manifestations of the devil are in keeping with Luther's perception of evil as a personal, objective power seeking to destroy, a perception which Bunyan shared.





## VI. Conclusion

Much has been written of the relationship between Bunyan and Calvin. Indeed, for the most part, critics generally understand Bunyan's theology only in terms of Calvinism. Although a few critics, such as Henri Talon<sup>1</sup> and S.T. Coleridge<sup>2</sup>, have made comments in passing on Luther's influence upon the Puritan writer, study of this relationship is rare. In John Bunyan, Richard Greaves closely examines occurrences of Luther's theology in Bunyan's writings, but does not define the implications of Luther's theology on Bunyan's art.

The intention of this thesis is not to deny Calvin's impact upon Bunyan, for it is indeed profound. Calvin's understanding of predestination determines the structure of both Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress. The movement from election through vocation, justification, sanctification to glorification is the organizing principle both of Bunyan's spiritual autobiography and of his allegory. Furthermore, Calvin's influence is evident in Bunyan's characters, for they are either good or evil, elect or damned. This uncompromising moral judgement that Bunyan passes upon his characters reveals his indebtedness to Calvin.



Nevertheless, Calvin's emphasis upon the absolute and sovereign will of God, an emphasis upon which he makes predestination entirely dependent, contrasts with the intensely personal element evident in Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress. Likewise, Calvin's tendency to the abstract and remote is the antithesis of the concrete and living quality of Bunyan's works. In order to understand these aspects of Bunyan's style we must turn to Luther.

Bunyan reveals the relationship between himself and Luther for us in Grace Abounding, where he writes that Luther's commentary on Galatians could have been written from his own heart: "I found my condition in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his Book had been written out of my heart" (129). Not only does Bunyan compare his experience with Luther's, but he also informs the reader of the importance of Luther's commentary to him: "I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Mr. Luther upon the Galatians, (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded Conscience" (130).

Luther exerted significant influence on Bunyan. This is disclosed in Bunyan's plainness of style and the violence and simplicity of his diction. The characterization of evil as dynamic and objective, and



the personal and living qualities he ascribes to the Word of God, also betrays the impact of Luther on Bunyan. Finally, Bunyan, without ignoring the role of God as judge, places the emphasis on Him as a gracious and personal Savior. This is an understanding of God's nature that he shared with Luther, and is the Savior Bunyan describes in his works.

In any study which emphasizes the influence of one person's works or ideas on another's, there is a tendency to obscure that which is unique to the one being influenced. Bunyan's art is certainly his own, and not just the result of the impact of Luther and Calvin.<sup>3</sup> For example, Bunyan's use of allegory - indeed, the fact that he writes fiction at all - is something that Luther and Calvin did not do. Bunyan transforms his own visions, struggles, and experiences into instructive, moving, and believable fiction, and imbues his writing with the vibrancy of living reality. These are Bunyan's greatest achievements as a writer.





## Footnotes

### I. Theological Background: Luther

<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, Luther: An Introduction to His Thought, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Holl, "Martin Luther on Luther," in Interpreters of Luther, ed., Jaroslav Pelikan, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ebeling, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Merle D'Aubigne, The Life and Times of Martin Luther, In his History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Ebeling, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Roland H. Bainton, A Life of Martin Luther: Here I Stand, New York: New American Library, 1950, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Ebeling, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Roland H. Bainton, Studies on the Reformation, Series Two of Collected Papers in Church History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Holl, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Holl, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> D'Aubigne, p. 519.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>13</sup> Owen Chadwick, The Reformation, vol. 3 of The Pelican History of the Church, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981, p. 52.



<sup>14</sup> Bainton, Studies on the Reformation, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ebeling, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> D'Aubigne, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>22</sup> Ebeling, p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Luther, A Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, pp. 350-51. All other references to this work will be cited, by page reference, in the body of this thesis.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> Wayne J. Johnson, Theological Method in Luther and Tillich: Law-Gospel and Correlation, Washington: University Press of America, Inc., 1981, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas M. McDonough, O.P., The Law and the Gospel in Luther, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.



33 McDonough, p. 49.

34 *ibid.*, p. 48.

35 Ebeling, p. 167.

36 *ibid.*, p. 169.

37 McDonough, p. 49.

38 Ebeling, p. 226.

39 *ibid.*, p. 228.

40 *ibid.*, p. 226.

41 *ibid.*, p. 230.

42 *ibid.*, p. 230.

43 *ibid.*, p. 234.

44 *ibid.*, p. 234.

45 *ibid.*, p. 236.

46 Walter vonLoewenick, Luther's Theology of the Cross,  
Belfast: Christian Journals Ltd., 1976, p. 21.

47 McDonough, p. 551.

48 Ebeling, p. 163.

49 *ibid.*, p. 162.





## II. Theological Background: Calvin

<sup>1</sup> Although both Luther and Calvin's theological positions, with respect to the doctrine of predestination, are influenced by Augustine's ideas, Calvin emphasizes the sovereignty of God and Luther God's Grace. Calvin thereby acquires a more extreme view of the subject. MacKinnon describes the difference between Luther and Calvin's positions in this way:

Absolute predestination in virtue of God's sovereign will occupies the fundamental place in Calvin's thought whereas the "gracious God," whom Luther had long sought and at last found in "the Gospel of Christ," stands at the centre of his thought.

(p. 216)

Calvin does not shrink from the categoric assertion, in the pulpit and through the press, of the dogma of predestination in its extreme form, which, he holds, is the only scriptural one and is alone compatible with the glory of God as absolute Sovereign of the universe. In so doing he went beyond Paul and Augustine, if not Luther, and found himself at variance with Melancthon, Bullinger, and other fellow Reformers.

(p. 250)

From: James Mackinnon, Calvin and the Reformation, New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. II, trans. Henry Beveridge, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981, p. 203. All other references from this two volume edition will be cited in the body of the thesis by book, chapter and section number.

<sup>3</sup> Francois Wendel, Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought, trans. Philip Mairet, New York: Harper and Row, pub., 1963, p. 264.



<sup>4</sup> John H. Leith, "The Doctrine of the Will in The Institutes of the Christian Religion," in Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series: Essays on Calvin and the Reformation, ed. Dikran Y. Hadidian, Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1981, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> James Mackinnon, Calvin and the Reformation, New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962, p. 244.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> J.I. Packer, "Calvin the Theologian," in Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology: John Calvin, ed. G.E. Duffield, Abingdon: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966, p. 170.



### III. The Influence of Luther and Calvin on Grace Abounding

<sup>1</sup> John Bunyan, Grace Abounding, ed. Roger Sharrock, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 6. All other quotations from this text will be cited in the body of the thesis with reference to the appropriate paragraph number.

<sup>2</sup> Lynn V. Sadler, John Bunyan, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Bunyan writes little about glorification in this work because his purpose is to present what God has done for him in this life, and to encourage others to allow God to do the same for them.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Greaves, John Bunyan, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969, p. 155.





#### IV. Calvin and The Pilgrim's Progress: Structure

<sup>1</sup> John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, 2nd. ed., ed. Roger Sharrock, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960, p. 6. All other references from this work will be cited in the body of the thesis by page number.

<sup>2</sup> The marginal gloss beside Good-Will's exhortation that Christian be content to bear the burden until the appropriate opportunity to free himself occurs, reads: "There is no deliverance from the guilt, and burden of sin, but by the death and blood of Christ" (p. 28).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Greaves, John Bunyan, p. 88.



V. Luther and The Pilgrim's Progress:  
Image, Setting, and Character

<sup>1</sup> James F. Forrest, "Bunyan's Threatening Hill," Expository Times, 86 (October, 1974), p. 23. In this article Forrest suggests that Luther's Galatians influenced Bunyan in creating the mountain that threatens Christian.

<sup>2</sup> See Ephesians chapter 6 where Paul outlines in detail the "armour" of God. Luther employs the idea of the Christian as one who is to be "armed" in his commentary; see p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> In Grace Abounding, (173), Bunyan describes temptations as "masterless hell-hounds," "roaring and bellowing," and making "hideous" noises. This experience is accompanied with darkness and clouds, which obscures his ability to "see" God.

<sup>4</sup> Luther, in his commentary on Galatians, (p. 50), describes the devil as one who "assails with great violence," and overwhelms the believer with "heaps, flood, and whole seas of sins" in order to terrify the believer and drive him to despair.

<sup>5</sup> Bunyan incorporates many puns into his works. In the event of the key and the "damnable hard" lock in Doubting Castle, he puns upon the word "damnable," indicating that if Christian had not discovered the "key" the result could have been the loss of salvation. Lynn Sadler develops the idea of the importance of Bunyan's puns in her work John Bunyan. See p. 61 for her reference to the "damnable lock."

<sup>6</sup> Bunyan also understood Christ as hidden in a "contrary," which only the Holy Spirit discloses. This idea is important to Luther's theology of the Cross. Bunyan, in The Pilgrim's Progress, writes: "Christ is so hid in God from the natural apprehensions of all flesh, that he cannot by any man be savingly known, unless God the Father reveals him to them" (p. 148).



<sup>7</sup> Roger Sharrock, John Bunyan, London: St. Martin's Press, 1968, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> James F. Forrest, "Vision, Form, and the Imagination in the Second Part of The Pilgrim's Progress (1684)," The Journal of Narrative Technique, vol. 13, no. 2 (Spring, 1982), pp. 109-116. Forrest fully develops the differences between Part One and Two in this article.

<sup>10</sup> See James F. Forrest, "Bunyan's Ignorance and The Flatterer: A Study in the Literary Art of Damnation," Studies in Philology, LX, 1 (January, 1963), pp. 12-22. Forrest identifies Ignorance's sin as pride: "a belief in one's own righteousness leading to a rejection of the means of grace offered in Christ" (p. 18). Thus because Ignorance feels secure in his own merits he simply refuses to listen to Christian and Hopeful as they try to reveal to him his need of Christ.





## VI. Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Henri Talon, John Bunyan: The Man and His Works, trans. Barbara Wall, London: St. Martin's Press, 1951, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> H.N. Coleridge, ed., The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vol. III, New York: Ams Press, 1967, p. 398.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Greaves, John Bunyan, p. 153:  
Like most writers Bunyan assimilated what he read and what he was taught, so that in end what he expressed in his writings was a unique blending of existing ideas coloured and transformed in various ways by his own convictions, study, and experience.



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